Relearning Data in Education: Inspiriting Truth and Reconciliation Teacher Education as an Emerging and Expanding Relational Field

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Abstract

This thesis-by-article documents my psychical, physical, indeed spiritual doctoral studies journey to understand and make felt how we (or at least me, as a white Canadian citizen) as scholars and educators might fully attend to the relational implications of relationality in our work, including how we might honour the relationality of our data from review and theorization, collection, analysis, and re/presentation through our knowledge dissemination as archived and taught. Inspired by the relational implications of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its calls for teacher education praxes, my doctoral work became necessarily a multi-layered methodological project as well as an arts-based knowledge dissemination prototyping project.

I share three main manuscripts: 1) a relational literature review titled and published as *The transeunt listener: Towards futurities of re-learning in truth and reconciliation curriculum and teacher education*; 2) a methodological frameworks treatise titled *Relational lacunae and (re)turning: Towards an inspirited relational research methodology for curriculum studies and kindred futurities*; and 3) a report on the methods and findings of my dissertation research titled *Relearning data in education: An arts-based inspiriting of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education*.

After introducing this dissertation document in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 I share what I have termed the practice of a *transeunt listener*, or myself as a reader who engages reading while open to and experiences subjective and intersubjective transformation through reading the words of authors as an opportunity to both physically and psychically move through and listen for the complexly relational hopes of those other than myself. Through my literature review and listening to the data of my research participants, all influential scholars of TRC-responsive education (n=3 Indigenous and n=2 non-Indigenous), I realized a key gap in truth and reconciliation re/presentations: *spirit*.

I follow my central methodological call from Chapter 2 in Chapter 3, theorizing towards the possibility of a robust and multivalent discourse of *spirit*, what (or whom) I offer is the vital solvent and resolvent between notions of relationality as a distinct yet commensurate formation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews that challenges theorists to reimagine what they mean by the word ‘relationality.’ I offer that spirit is not only what animates all life and relationships but is also a real, animate more-than-human relative constitutive of ourselves and

our data, and so call on all scholars of complex relational topics to begin seeking spirit in/as data rather than continuing its elision in theory, re/presentation of research, and practice.

In Chapter 4, I share my findings and preliminary considerations of the re/presentational and practical implications of researching and teaching towards relearning spirit as data and curricular kin. Pragmatically for my deposited dissertation, this takes the form of a richly visualized, arts-based report on the methods and findings of my dissertation research including my preliminary process work with Jordyn Hendricks, a Two-Spirit and Red River Métis artist with ties to the St. Laurent and The Pas regions of what is now Manitoba. In Chapter 5, I conclude my dissertation research writing with present and future implications, and hopes, for seeking spirit in education.

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Acknowledgements

My dissertation project would neither have materialized as it is nor at all without many kin, human and more-than, and including those of whom I may not be consciously aware or presently able to describe. I thus want to thank all my relatives, including my reader, and including those who connect me to the spirit worlds I am still on a journey into finding kinship.

While to my knowledge I lack any existent biological family, I maintain a lasting gratitude for my late mother, Barbara Halina Phillips (née Ferdynus). Despite embodying much intergenerational trauma — born a displaced person without a home or even nationality — she taught me how to love knowledge, art, lakes, forests, and all my ecological kin and find belonging with them amidst persistent displacement and estrangement from a sense of place and home. To my lost fraternal twin brother Gregory: I will always love and miss you; I hope you are happy, wherever your spirit might be.

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Many of those darkest days were health crises — between the autumn of 2024 and spring of 2025 in particular, I twice almost lost my vision entirely, via different but compounding, emergency pathologies. I endured a great deal of pain, physical and otherwise, as I had to navigate the Ottawa health care system and continually advocate for the care I needed for my "very special eyes." I wish to thank Dr. David Maberley at the Ottawa Eye Institute and even moreso his assistant Anna, who intervened to ensure I had several critical surgeries, and the exceedingly rare, precise but humane care of Ottawa retinal surgical fellow Dr. Abdulrahman Alotaibi, who saved my retinas from complete destruction. My optic nerves would have been irrecoverable without the welcoming back into care and due diligence of my childhood optometrist in Toronto, Dr. Andrea Mierzynski, who first identified my closed-angle crises, the uniquely challenging, intersecting causal pathologies I was experiencing, and connected me with emergency care here in Ottawa. In Ottawa, I would not have such successfully bionic eyes without the surgical expertise of Dr. Mark Sim.

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I wish to finally but wholeheartedly acknowledge and thank Canada's Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for their honouring and support over the first three years of my doctoral studies via a SSHRC Doctoral Scholarship, which made the depth of my foundational inquiry financially sustainable and so ultimately fruitful and representable here in this document.

Chapter 1
Relearning Data: An Introduction

> There is no fixed truth to return to. Nor can we return to or recreate neutrality — scientific, political or philosophical. Truth was always ecological — always situated, always relational, always caught up in who was saying what to whom, about what, how, for what purposes and with what effects. The problem with this statement is that it presumes that the inner state of someone about to say something is the most important factor in what they say, how, why, where when, to whom and with what result. Not only are those inner states never completely (and perhaps not even partly) knowable, even by the speaker, but they are only part of the situation that gives rise to someone saying or doing what they do. Feminist, anti-racist and decolonizing struggles have taught us — especially white, Western men — to distrust ourselves, our attitudes and our ability to enforce our will, not necessarily for good reason but just for the hell of it. (Cubitt, 2023, p. xvi)

Truth and Reconciliation: An Inspiration for Relearning Data

My dissertation emerges at the 10th anniversary of the release of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Final Report and its Calls to Action (TRC, 2015). As the title of my dissertation suggests, my doctoral project was inspired by and took great care in attending the full relational implications of the TRC's work, findings, and Calls to Action for education (TRC, 2015), as embodied in what I earlier identified as an emerging field of study represented by its authors' scholarship and practices (Phillips, 2021a). The result, shared across the chapters of this dissertation document, was a necessarily complex, nonlinear methodological project that required me to: listen to and be intersubjectively transformed by TRC education literature and practice (Chapter 2); in turn and as so transformed find a promising source of commensurability between Indigenous and non-Indigenous notions of relationality as has been so deeply implicated by TRC-responsive and wider decolonizing praxes (Chapter 3); and ultimately begin relearning how I might honour the full relationality of my research data, particularly through re/presentation of relational data that is typically invisibilized in conventional academic knowledge dissemination (shared as methods and findings in Chapter 4). The following sections of this introductory chapter maps the journey — and what turned into a critically spiritual sojourn for me — of my doctoral project. I introduce my project's core ideas and so situate myself, my thinking, and its resulting outputs as they are contained within this dissertation document. I begin with a discussion of truth, Truth and Reconciliation, why I

undertook this personally and academically challenging work and so why it should benefit my reader. I further attend to my own situatedness and my own relational implications as a non-Indigenous Canadian yet human being unavoidably integral to this project. I conclude with a map of my dissertation chapters to assist my reader in navigating my doctoral research thinking and feeling, which, as documented here, is an opening up and sharing of my own journey as a relational entity enmeshed in my research topic and my participants' data.

The above epigraph from cultural studies and aesthetic politics scholar Sean Cubitt expresses and provokes, I think, the discursive or representational world(view) towards which my thesis is and must be primarily directed towards. While particularly relevant to a rhetorical text as a representation of a research project that takes Truth and Reconciliation (TRC, 2015) teacher education discourse and practice as a subject, Cubitt's words incite for me productive hope that the motivating spirit of the TRC might be felt and enacted across difference, despite, as I discuss shortly, how much truth and reconciliation as a decolonial political project might now be appropriated into status-quo colonial curricular practice. Cubitt (2014, 2023) offers that an *ecocritical* treatment of truth might challenge us to not assume that we have a shared or particularly useful, particularly for decolonial projects, notion of truth. Ecocritique is a practice of radical questioning and accepting that humans and environments have been (and continue to be) ripped apart historically, sociologically, and *aesthetically*. Ecocritical aesthetic politics attempts to produce a commons through engaging with what might be typically excluded from yet presently needed in our representational repertoires, including concepts of truth or ecology itself, particularly through encounters of concentrated moments of crisis when worldviews and practices of social ordering and ecological forces meet or collide. Drawing on Cubitt's (2023) broad frame I attempt to challenge us, as westernized human beings (understanding ourselves as not essentially but socialized as western through particular onto-epistemological ecologies) and Indigenous/ized human beings, that is, standing with Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights for self-determination and resurgence, but also understanding relational renewal as a likewise socio-ecological process open to all humans alike. Throughout my dissertation, I thus invite my reader to consider the increasingly limited, and limiting, codified registers of hegemonic truth culture by understanding truth as verb, or truth-actions by:

1. The legacy of ancestral skills and knowledges purloined as forced labour or commodified through pernicious property cultures in the form of taxonomies, discourses, archives, and machinery and its outputs;
2. The ostensibly freely given and appropriated work of ecosystems broadly construed: energy, materials, discernably (and indiscernibly) discrete entities and process from within and beyond the bio- and social spheres of the planet and techniques for capturing them; and
3. Colonized/ing humans in salaried employment in the information and creative industries (e.g., 'knowledge economies' which include academia) and the freely donated work of uploaders (e.g., research subjects) and viewers (e.g., learners or prospective future creators or teachers of knowledge) that process captured data into copyrightable and exchangeable units of neoliberal flows of capital, including credits of/monetary incentivization of research dissemination or 'knowledge mobilization.'

I will shortly attend to a fulsome account of what I mean by ecologies, as my reader has most likely begun to wonder how multivalent I intend this word to be; for now, I use the word exclusive of a human/nature, biological/nonbiological, or physical/nonphysical binary. First, truth as truth-action humanizes a critique of human limitations, including humans' impact on each other and ecologies, within ecological systems, and as such systems are always part of us. What is true emerges from the always changing historical relations between humans, the ecologies we are entangled within, what we understand as technological or distinct mediators between ourselves and our ecologies, and our understandings of all of these ostensibly separate members of relationships are always partial even as any human might attempt to know them truly; "the oddity of the human as a discrete historical condition [is] constantly evolving in relation to the ecology it strives to exploit, escape or conserve" (Cubitt, 2023, p. xvii). Our ecologies therefore will always contain, be constituted by, and exceed our understanding through relational locutors and interlocutors which (or whom) we might not be individually or independently aware or perceptive of. As Cubitt (2023) reminds me, the "author and readers of this [thesis] are human after all" (p. xvii). And so, truths and representations, and our aesthetic capacities to engage with them, become inextricably entangled with any meaning or project of reconciliation as undertaken by humans, together perceptually limited within and between our numbers and in relation to the broader yet still interconnecting more-than-human entities and processes that sustain us. I also consider how present-day academic industrial complexes (borne

of colonialism) continue to extract representational capital from Indigenous Peoples, cultures, knowledges, and bodies.

While I provide a sustained account of and reflect on my own experiences as a white student and scholar with Truth and Reconciliation as an emerging literature and ethically expansive practice in Chapter 2, here I remind and/or prime my reader to consider the truth (and so its implications for truth) of the TRC. The TRC was formed in response to the history and ongoing effects of assimilative and genocidal treatment of Indigenous Peoples by the Canadian state. As early as the 17th century — shortly after the beginning of European colonization of what would later be known as Canada — Christian missionaries founded boarding schools to indoctrinate Indigenous children into Western European sociopolitical culture. The Canadian government would later use these missionary schools as a model for the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, designed to exert colonial control and eradicate Indigenous populations, cultures, and languages by separating Indigenous children from their families. The government-funded IRS system was officially enacted in the 1880s, not long after the implementation of the 1876 Indian Act, which had the explicit purpose of extinguishing Indigenous cultures and ways of life. The law codified the right to educate and assimilate Indigenous children, and consequently, expanded the reach of the IRS system. The system continued to expand, with schools deliberately built far from Indigenous communities to minimize contact and increase children's sense of alienation from their families and cultures, while subjecting children to abuse and neglect. This system resulted in ongoing intergenerational trauma with lasting impacts on Indigenous communities.

In response to mounting Indigenous-led activism and eventually successful litigation against the Canadian government, the TRC was formed. The Commission then spent years hearing testimony from residential school Survivors within the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, compiling a comprehensive report on the atrocities committed and the intergenerational effects of the system. The Commission subsequently produced a Final Report in 2015, outlining its findings and recommendations known as the 94 Calls to Action, far-reaching policy changes including calls to create comprehensive educational programs that would not only prevent such atrocities from ever happening again through teaching a fuller truth of Canada's histories but also engender significant, decolonial social transformation across Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and lifeways — i.e., reconciliation as I understand it, a

continual renewal of relationships towards becoming better *relatives*, or kin. Overall, while the TRC's publication has been a significant step towards reconciliation, many challenges remain in addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and supporting Indigenous communities in Canada. It is important to remember that the Canadian government fought against hearing Indigenous voices and continues to fight assertions of Indigenous histories and rights — the government did not fund the TRC out of goodwill. My reader should also consider the sustained colonial resistance to hearing Indigenous voices by Canadian child welfare systems (Blackstock, 2009) or judicial/law enforcement and health care system complicity in lethal anti-Indigenous racism and dehumanization (David & Mitchell, 2021; McCallum & Perry, 2018). Given that it has been 10 years since the TRC's Calls to Action were first published and although it was not a primary research question for me, my doctoral project indirectly and later more explicitly considered why little to no structural or rather worldview change has taken place across national institutions and cultures.

Many scholars of Truth and Reconciliation education would agree (e.g., most if not all of my participants) that truth and reconciliation as it has become curricularized is now a colonized 'topic' (or curricular content) rather than an actualized, non-linear praxis of teaching, learning, and living towards becoming better relatives, human to human and more-than. As a white yet complexly intersectional Canadian citizen within this context, I am particularly concerned that teaching ourselves (as non-Indigenous scholars and educators) to be distrustful, uncomfortable, and doubtful in our own abilities to relate to one another as fellow human beings is arguably very much done for the curricular 'hell of it' — a timeless purgatory in which the ability to work towards renewed/ing relationships is forever denied in perfect compatibility with status quo neoliberal, perhaps neocolonial, curriculum and lifeways. Part and parcel of this stasis is an as-yet unrealized attending to the more-than-human and the implications that such serious care and thought would have for education. This distancing of ourselves from more deeply relational commitments continues even as IRS survivors and community Elders frequently underscored that without such relational worldview transformation reconciliation is impossible. Education has yet to fully consider what becoming a 'better relative' might mean, largely because its majority non-Indigenous experts continue to claim a disabling limitation of relational understanding. What does get 'included' in curriculum is some truth — but as my participants have confirmed with me this now means that TRC education is widely reduced to the past-tense of the IRS and

so checked-off by a single day of wearing orange shirts to school. The effect is very much business as usual in research, curriculum, classrooms, and knowledge dissemination. Toxic, colonial/ized life advances unabated.

Despite the continually liminal status of truth and reconciliation here in what some call Canada, my doctoral research project yet inspired hope. My project and my offerings here would not have come to be without the data graciously given by my research participants (listed in order of initial interview date):

- Dwayne Donald, Papasechase Cree scholar, educator, and knowledge keeper who is presently a Professor and a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Reimagining Teacher Education with Indigenous Wisdom Traditions at the University of Alberta. His current work focuses on ways in which Indigenous wisdom traditions can expand and enhance understanding of curriculum and pedagogy. A descendent of the amiskwaciwiyiniwak (Beaver Hills Cree), he is perhaps the most prominent and respected expert in concepts like ethical relationality and is particularly concerned with investing as much time and energy into educating teacher candidates over publication.
- Lisa Howell, a white settler Canadian and at the time a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Ottawa. Her doctoral thesis spoke directly to my research questions and was personally and academically motivated by her work with Indigenous students in K-12 schooling. She was and is a co-founder of Project of Heart, an ‘open source’ inquiry based, hands-on, collaborative, inter-generational, artistic pedagogy of seeking truth about the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Howell has remained, like me, committed to working through the full relational implications of TRC education, particularly through her teacher education practice at the University of Ottawa. She is presently an Adjunct Professor at the University of Ottawa and a Research Associate/Collaborator at other Canadian universities, through which she collaborates with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars end educators towards efforts core to the ethos of the TRC.
- Jennifer Markides, a Red River Métis scholar and educator from the High River region of Alberta. She is presently an Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Learning and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Youth Wellbeing and Education across both the Werklund School of Education and the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Markides’s work on relationality as embodied through her own walking and noticing

practices became highly influential to my work; we had several invaluable conversations about methodologies, including of reading literature and arts-based methods, across my project. She became a trusted friend and colleague.

- Kiera Brant-Birioukov, a Haudenosaunee (Kanyen'keha:ka) scholar and educator from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory (Ontario). When my project began, Brant-Birioukov was a recent PhD graduate of the Curriculum Studies program at the University of British Columbia and had just begun a tenure-track position at York University. Her emerging work directly addressed many calls of the TRC, particularly the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges as legitimate curricula rather than additives. I would learn more from Brant-Birioukov as she published and practiced across the years of my project, including her eventual departure from the academy to pursue her own consultancy firm focused on work that she felt was not being supported by her institution.
- Jennifer Tupper, a white settler education scholar from Edmonton, Alberta. She was and remains the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Her praxis spans several topics entangled with TRC education, particularly historical thinking, settler consciousness, and her highly influential work on Treaty education. With the University of British Columbia's Jan Hare, she is leading the current revision work of the Association of Canadian Deans of Education's *Accord on Indigenous Education*, a document that responded to legislative and policy shifts supporting Indigenous control of Indigenous education, through which she aims to disrupt the colonial foundations of education and to create and sustain different ways of thinking about and doing education in Canada.

Through what I suggest was a truly relational approach to a highly relational research topic, I endeavoured to relate to my participants' data (published work, interview data, and the emergent re/presentational data of my being with the data) as something given and deserving of respect, as kin emergent of our relational encounters (across space, place, time, and differing media or sensorial registers). My doctoral project thus deeply considered the relational possibilities and limitations of truth and reconciliation teacher education discourse and practice, finding paradoxical stasis yet living hope for transformation.

To paraphrase Dwayne Donald (personal communication, 28 May 2023), this stasis is perhaps not surprising when we consider that how we teach across westernized education has not changed since the TRC or even earlier incorporation of Indigenous scholarship into westernized

educational theory and practice, and neither, I would add, has how we represent our ideas or otherwise consider certain ideas or data as worthy of representation. What is "better" has been re-enfolded into colonial curriculum and institutional practice, with land-based education commodified, Indigenous bodies in academia now once more resisting commodification, and Indigenous knowledges in education ultimately voided from typical curricula through habitual denial of their paradigmatic implications, however welcoming to all humans. Across my thesis, such as it is presently contained by the material practices surrounding what Cubitt (2014, p. 221) terms "the control of light", I attempt a continual reflexivity amidst the limitations or opportunities of the specific media constituting the hegemonic frameworks that shape our knowledge of and sensory experience within the world, academic and arguably writ large. Predominantly methodological, then, in my thesis I am always attempting to attend, as aesthetic politics, the "repressed and imprisoned ancestors" who might disrupt our future truths as limited to "the perpetual present that contemporary capital tries to produce" — even if such a process might presently work "in the same way that remembering produces the memories it recalls" (Cubitt, 2023, p. xix). Because human memory is as contingent on those of our ecologically enmeshed relatives as it is on our own singularities, however, we are always at risk (or benefit) of onto-epistemological "glitches" (Cubitt, 2023, p. 185) or, I posit, spiritual experiences in our interactions and knowledge that might complexify perceptual and conceptual linearity of each other and the world. I later share how I furthered this perceptual-conceptual complexity through collaborating with Jordyn Hendricks, a Two-Spirit Red River Métis artist, to find hope in how we, with all of our relations and so including spirit, might share and together reimagine our representational (and so research and teaching) repertoires.

Relationality and Data as Aesthetico-Politically Inspirited: Ethics, Kinship, and Ecological Belonging

> Kin relationality and ecological belonging are endorsed and supported through spiritual pursuits embedded in cultural expressions in oral, embodied, and collective narratives (for example, in languages, storytelling, habits, rituals and rites of passage, songs, or ceremonial dances, law and governance, and lifeways). Most often, these narratives intend to nourish awareness of "Spirit," defined here as the animating principle of life weaving all relationships. (Celidwen & Keltner, 2024, p. 3)

Considering my dissertation project methodological at heart, then, I am inspired by truth and reconciliation as a nonlinear, aesthetic praxis that leaves open the possibility that we (myself a white Canadian and all my human relatives included) might remember a future together and in ways that may require some lost and/or reconfigured relational technologies. Com/passionately contrary to what some authors (e.g., Howell & Ng-A-Fook, 2023) have stressed in (not necessarily conscious) service to an arguably commodified, relationship-stratifying, and perpetual present of unsettling and discomfort, we as white or otherwise settler scholars striving for truth and reconciliation cannot have a linear 'truth and then' reconciliation. Truth is worthless without care, including reparative care, for each other. Here, I intend 'each other' to be broadly construed to include every entity we may or may not be aware of, human or more-than, as relatives, and however relationally disabled we or our relatives might be. We, non-Indigenous and Indigenous together, cannot hold a capacity for truly caring for each other in abeyance if we are to share truth. As Cubitt (2023) considers that linear oppression, including colonialism, is always vulnerable to glitches in the status quo of our ecologies through necessary representational flux, I consider that we, as ecological relatives, always have access to a capacity to care that might exceed our individual/digital present moments through our aesthetic modes of engagement in research and education. My project thus deeply considers how we, as humans together, relate to each other, knowledge, and our data, including how we might care for all these ecological relatives, and so what onto-epistemological technologies we may have available through which to perceive, conceive, and represent better relationships.

Across the following chapters that serve as the documentation of my dissertation research spanning the past 4.5 years, I share how my thinking about data has changed, how my methodologies and learnings from my literature and research participants have entangled in relation to myself as a white, at first ostensibly settler, researcher, artist, educator, and complexly intersectional human being, and how I have attempted to realize a response to the primary questions of my doctoral thesis:

- What would a relational data paradigm look like for curriculum studies and teacher education?
- How can we work towards honouring place, kinship, and spirit through academic production and citational modes?

- How can knowledge production and dissemination be unsettling / decolonizing within our status quo modes of academic engagement?
- In what ways might truth and reconciliation teacher education as an emerging field be represented in ways that do not reduce its relational complexity?

I have always envisioned my response to these questions as not only consisting of a relatively traditional (as required by my institution) written thesis manuscript(s) but also an alternative dissemination that does not reduce the relational implications/meaning of the data. Across writing and beyond the written word, I understand my work to be arts-based materializations of attempts at honouring the relational spirit of my data — a complex, unsetting but also *inspiriting* knowledge production and sharing that does not exclude the relationality of the data given. As I relate next, inspiriting to me is an active inclusion of spirit and an active program against exclusion of spirit — what I see as the necessary solvent and resolvent between disparate worldviews (e.g., Indigenous and non-Indigenous), particularly conducive of extending relational care across difference, human and more-than.

Core to my thesis, as implicated by TRC education literature and praxes, was the meaning of *relationality*. I contend that relationality as a word (and its derivatives), despite its ubiquity across contemporary research publications and curricula, expresses not what it might represent but rather the absence of it. I was compelled by the literature, my participants' data, and my growing awareness of their (and so my own) constituting relationships to think-through relationality as deeply as I could through the affordances to which I had access. I began by attempting a relational synthesis of westernized and Indigenous understandings of relationality, as distinct yet not completely incommensurate or mutually inaccessible. For me and in the relational context of my project, participants, and data, this synthesis meant focusing on *ethical relationality* (e.g., Donald, 2016) and *kinship relationality* (e.g., Tynan, 2021) as integral to one another; ethical relationality foregrounds and de-hierarchizes relationships as ethically charged, interconnecting, and constituting of all of existence, human and the more-than. Kinship relationality attends to how we make kin across difference and so extend care to each other and all of our kin, including beyond colonial essentialisms of relation such as genetic relative/nonrelative, human/nonhuman, and animate/inanimate. Resonating with my relational literature review findings of TRC education, I arrived at (or returned to) a crucial interface between these often limited (ostensibly in comparison to non-westernized) concepts of

relationality and how these concepts appear sustained in Indigenous worldviews: *spirit*. I found that spirit could very well be the resolvent between Indigenous and non-Indigenous relational worldviews and so integral to realizing transformational change implicated by Truth and Reconciliation teacher education. However, I realized that what spirit is or could be for all humans and our kin — alive, animate, sentient, real — was not represented in the literature. I attempted to put language to this idea by referring to spirit, spirituality, and even westernized reachings towards it and its relational possibilities as *relational lacunae*, or cavities or gaps made either opaque or transparent by virtue of our perceptual affordances, including our notions of relationality. Considering the ethical implications of attending an entity (such as a scholar or student) who might not have the affordances to perceive spirit, I offer that a westernized/colonized subject is in (relational) fact not intrinsically inferior to an Indigenous subject in their human potential to relate. Drawing on disability theory that has for some time now understood disability as an effect of the relationships one is enmeshed in rather than essential to a person, I considered that relationality — as inspirited or inclusive of spirit as a vital relative — might yet be perceivable as constitutive of my participants' data: their published works (perhaps containing lacunae) and in my relational sitting with the data (attempting to represent what a typical academic representational repertoire might diminish or not register, particularly what spirit might be).

Attending to spirit and data as including spirit is evidently a representational concern; already I anticipate that my reader is wondering what spirit *is,* or at least for me. Representing ourselves and our knowledges with as much relational fidelity so as to include spirit implicates research as a potentially *non-disciplinary ethico-aesthetico bio-political* praxis. The aesthetico-political refers to the intersection of aesthetic experience and political structures in shaping subjectivities, ethical relations, and social imaginaries (Rancière, 2004). Aesthetico-political inquiry is concerned with how perceptions, sensations, and embodied engagements influence political realities, particularly in relation to power, justice, and knowledge production. Western(ized) theorists of the aesthetico-political remember Merleau-Ponty's final arrival at the flesh (the bio-), which "became the way of being, not just of individual humans and animals, but also of society and the world at large" (Plot, 2013, p. 219). A few westernized thinkers have followed through on this enfleshment of philosophy to consider the flesh as "a collective way of being of society that is neither just object nor just subject, neither just visible nor just seer, but

both" (Plot, 2013, p. 219). Being enfleshed is to exist "as simultaneously active *and* passive, subject *and* object, seer *and* visible" (Plot, 2013, p. 218). For Hannah Arendt (1958), whose work seems to me particularly salient to our present moment of rising fascisms, politics concretized through material aesthetics was at the heart of how we understand the world and what is just — what is worth caring about made tangible. The aesthetico-political is how "being and appearing" coincide in what Arendt described in terms of the "space of appearance" (p. 199). Or, what is real is what appears or is shown (Arendt, 1978). Yet, despite aesthetics' criticality to how we understand our political relationships, including democracy writ and now withering large, westernized theories always fail at the point of being able to observe themselves — "it is also the case that for all flesh there is always a 'blind spot,'" or limitations of perception (Plot, 2013, p. 219). This observation rebirths "truth" (and any kind of durable and just future society) as requiring a radically relational trust and bridging between individual limitations of perception.

By 'trust,' I mean to suggest motivation toward and even spiritual extension and reception of what Celidwen and Keltner (2024) term *prosocial* care and actions, or thoughts and actions that extend feelings of responsibility, care, aid, sacrifice and even love across the webs of relationships that constitute us and bind us into ethical responsibilities. Celidwen and Keltner propose an ecological kinship belonging worldview in which a researcher or educator might take Indigenous and non-Indigenous concepts of relationality, ecology, and kinship together along a relationally logical trajectory in which all possible kin, or relatives, are taken seriously as real and in effecting and affecting relationships. Such a worldview considers typical (in westernized frames) non-entities as animate: not only water, earth, and natural processes such as weather and geology are alive and worth caring about, but also knowledges, ideas, and, I would add, data. In other words, Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges are as real as each other, and so are their constituting kin — such as spirit. As Celidwen and Keltner (2024) stress:

> In their shaping of social, political, and economic life, kin relationality and ecological belonging constitute an overarching ethical model of reverence that reveals environmental systems and relationships as having sentience, distinctness, and agency […]. This form of environmental welfare is the understanding of health and flourishing of all living forms, including environmental occurrences, extending as well to cultural phenomena such as cosmogonies [….], rituals and rites of passage—including end of life

> transitions [.]—that connect humans with their environment and with past *and emerging ancestry* [emphasis added]. (p. 3)

While Celidwen and Keltner (2024, p. 3) make the move to "[define spirit as] the animating principle of life weaving all relationships" and while I do not necessarily disagree with their definition, the impulse behind my project is not to identify, classify, or 'fix' what spirit might be. Rather, my project is to consider how we might even begin to discuss, without collapsing difference, spirit in a relationally fulsome manner: how to individually and together represent our sense of spirit, however partial or limited by our present perceptual limitations, through our shared senses. Indeed, through the lessons of TRC praxis and through my participants' data as honoured through my arts-based methods (discussed in Chapter 4), I suggest that it is not my place to define spirit—not because I am non-Indigenous, but because I am only (socially constructed as) one human. Simultaneously, however, as a human, of flesh, I share affordances across difference and my limited senses, and some of my senses may be more open than others, or I might be more sensitive to some relationships than another person or entity, and *vice versa*. I take seriously Blackfoot scholar and author Leroy Little Bear's (2000) premise that if we are all constituted of relationships with each other and all of creation, we are all relatives. And if we are to truly embrace a lasting, intergenerational transformation of relationships as implied by notions of reconciliation, we must be open to new ancestors, including new spirits and relationships with them. What I can say, then, is that spirit is not just what animates all life but perhaps vitally contributes to animating care for it within and beyond ourselves, across but without denying difference, and enables (or might enable) ethical and kinship relationality for all humans. I am therefore particularly concerned with how we do or do not represent spirit (and other attending relationships) in our praxes.

Resisting finite imagination across difference, I thus position my project relative and open to relation with all disciplines and its practitioners — as non-disciplinary in itself and so intentionally resisting of centering one perspective over another. Non-disciplinarity, as an aesthetico-political project, resists the confinement of thought within established disciplinary boundaries, instead cultivating a mode of engagement that remains open, porous, and relational. It seeks not merely to blur lines between fields, but to actively stay in relation to a multiplicity of ways of thinking, being, and knowing—across cultures, epistemologies, and forms of expression (Manning, 2016; Harney & Moten, 2013). As an agile but vulnerable stance, non-disciplinarity

affirms the aesthetic as a site of possibility and the political as a space of negotiation, insisting that knowledge is not static or siloed, but emergent through entangled encounters (Barad, 2007). It is a practice of unlearning *and* relearning or even reimagining together, where the aim is not synthesis or resolution, but a sustained attunement to difference and complexity (Moten, 2018). Given the contexts and relational implications of my project including spirit, I suggest that my methods align with Danielle Boutet's (2008) notion of "spiritual forms", in which artmaking is an intentionally non-disciplinary "practice [of shaping] space, time and matter" to include not only tangible and intangible objects such as concepts and images, sounds, symbols, etc., but also attunement and relation "to consciousness and presence" of spirit as "an inherent dimension of consciousness" (pp. 3-4). I thus harness a non-disciplinary approach as I consider what could be in our blind spots as we attempt to represent knowledges, inclusive of our hopes, fears, and dreams, around topics like truth and reconciliation, and so what I see (and feel) is an ethical imperative to exceed the limitations of how we might represent and therefore conceive of their implicated *futurities*. I turn next to a discussion of how I understand futurities as distinct from futures, and so offer an understanding of my dissertation writing as a form of speculative literature or storytelling that welcomes readers from disciplines beyond my familiarities while I attempt to find affinity with and be changed by encounters with the aesthetico-political affordances of lifeworlds beyond my own experience.

Stories, Futurities, Language, and Data

> When an "Anishinaubae" says that someone is telling the truth, he says "w'daeb-awae." But the expression is not just a mere confirmation of a speaker's veracity. It is at the same time a philosophical proposition that, in saying, a speaker casts his words and his voice only as far as his vocabulary and his perception will enable him. (Johnston, 1990, p. 12)

Anishinaabe writer, storyteller, language teacher and scholar Basil Johnston gestures to the importance of language and literature—or traditions of storytelling—in the being of a person or peoples. At the time of his writing, Johnston mourned the loss of numerous Indigenous languages and their inherent knowledges across the nation state we call Canada. Johnston (1990) suggests that a people who have lost their Indigenous language "can never capture that kinship with and reverence for the Sun and the Moon, the sky and the water, or feel the lifebeat of Mother Earth or sense the change in her moods; no longer are the wolf, the bear and the caribou elder brothers but beasts, resources to be killed and sold" (p. 10). Part of but I feel enduring of

this loss, however, are also the stories, ways of retelling, and, as far as my vocabulary is able to express, the *spirit* (or perhaps perception of spirit) of story that settler colonial lifeways displace but cannot ever eliminate. As a complexly intersectional yet still white scholar of uncertain ancestry, I do not even know what my Indigenous language(s) might be. Superficially, I grew up in a settler colonial capitalist world. At the same time, I am nevertheless a human being who hopes to reconnect with the kinships I am surrounded by and imbued with. My own spirit — and I humbly suggest those of my participants as well — tells me that such kinships can be relearned and so such a sense of story felt again, relational vocabularies remade, in affinity with Indigenous futures. To welcome my reader into the following chapters of my dissertation that together are very much a story about my own journey as a human being unlearning colonial vocabularies and relearning re/presentational repertoires that I believe are most needed in times such as ours, I attend to the possibilities and necessary caveats I understand and must make in relation to language (broadly construed) and how it might constrain (or not) our ability to imagine futures unconstrained by present limitations of imagination and material arrangements.

Considering decolonization a complex perceptual proposition, I heed Pirbhai-Illich et al. (2024) as they challenge their educational research and teaching audience, reminding me that:

> Decolonizing our practices not only involves understanding and untangling the socio-historical, geo-political, educational, and economic relationships with coloniality that are embedded in our institutions and structures of governance, it also involves understanding and accepting our own complicity in perpetuating material and symbolic colonial violence within this system […]. (p. 214)

These complicities include how we may deny relationships with one another based on asymmetrical worldviews or some incommensurate edges between them (p. 214). To put an infinitely finer point on it, truth is made intelligible through how we might retrieve, enact, or reconfigure it together: “the ethical question of truth — what consequences arise from a particular truth-statement or performance — concerns its political responsibility and its aesthetic premium” (Cubitt, 2023, p. 258). In a so-called era of truth and reconciliation, I follow Cubitt in attempting to realize a future-oriented political responsibility in taking seriously the aesthetic potential of my words and actions, including in honouring a broader conception of responsibility to include my relationships to my ecology — human, more-than-human, conceptual,

technological, data — as calling me into subjecthood with them as kin, rather than treating them (data) as objects of insightful extraction.

Critically, then, nonlinear and rejoining futures are out there to be imagined together through shared (or shareable) storytelling. Indeed, as Choctaw poet, fiction writer, filmmaker, and playwright LeAnne Howe (2002) suggests, “even if worse comes to worst and our people forget where we left our stories, the birds will remember and bring them back to us” (p. 47). While Howe speaks about the kinship between Choctaw peoples, birds, and their shared stories, she implicates a sense of kinship and memory that endures outside but is yet accessible to individual human bodies. Elsewhere, Howe (1999) contends that embedded in the narratives of our North American colonial states are Indigenous lessons from which we still draw and through which we yet identify ourselves as Canadian. Howe retells how Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island related to the first European newcomers (as they did when they met any new peoples) through a shared sense of narrative. The stories shared with European newcomers, who would become settlers, inevitably created what we now understand as the countries of the United States and Canada, from agricultural abundance to confederation — the latter of which was learned by settlers from examples such as the Iroquois Confederacy (Howe, 1999). The traditional practices of telling these stories were themselves both representational repertoires, or languages, of ancient knowledge and future-shaping transformation. Since first contact, North American settlers have learned from Indigenous stories, albeit while not always fully understanding or respecting their power. As Indigenous literatures (oral and otherwise) continue to not only survive but also thrive and evolve, settlers, including academics, as fellow human beings have an opportunity to unlearn and *relearn* with, not just from, Indigenous futures.

However, Cherokee author and Indigenous literature scholar Daniel Heath Justice (2018) cautions against assuming a single model of "realism," or in our case ‘future,’ arguing that such an assumption can actually harm efforts toward figurative and experiential liberation. An untroubled use of the word “future” implies, first, that there is only one known true future reality against which all others must be measured, and second, that any cultural expressions or worldviews that diverge from this standard are, at best, inadequate and, at worst, pathological. I therefore ask my reader to consider that the word ‘futurities’ is intentional in my use and distinct from ‘futures.’ As cultural studies scholar Rebecca Wanzo (2020) relates her understanding of *futurity*:

> ’Futurity’ connotes not just what will happen or a time that is not yet. It is laden with affective attachments such as hope and fear. But it is best understood in relationship to the other words that are often proximate to it, such as ‘time,’ ‘horizon,’ ‘utopia,’ and ‘dystopia.’ Throughout North America, futurity is consistently associated with identity, linking ideas of what the future will look like with the belief that various groups can build a new space or, in our worst imaginings, be injured by an impending world that disavows or has no place for them. Futurities are simultaneous and sometimes competing with the idea of the future always contained within another project related to nation or identity. Theorists of futurity in American studies and cultural studies have thus focused on this nexus of identity and imagined world building. (p. 119)

As Wanzo further relates, before he coined the term “manifest destiny,” American ambassador John L. O’Sullivan declared (1839, p. 427) that the United States was destined to be “the great nation of futurity,” suggesting that European colonists never sought to “de-populate the land” by “wicked ambition.” The violent takeover of Turtle Island, or the pre-colonization and spirit-honouring name of North America, belies such mythologies. I presently suggest that we, as human beings, can yet craft better futurities together, if we choose to dream them into existence as kin: human-to-human and human to more-than, and inclusive of spirit.

Questions of language are thus inseparable from any project of futurity; considering Johnston’s (1990) lament for lost Indigenous languages alongside Howe’s (2002) hope drawn from an enduring source of teachings and teachers from which the animating spirit of such languages — story — might be relearned suggests a particular oscillation of worldview (including worldview of language) I further consider across my thesis. While I cannot address language in a disciplinarily fulsome way as might be done through linguistics, my non-disciplinary stance yet attends to language as more broadly construed to include any mode through which an animate entity might ‘communicate’ to another, or even themselves and so includes not only language as a noun for a socially constructed and maintained verbal vocabulary (e.g., Anishinaabemowin, Arabic, Cree, English, Inuktitut, French, Sarsi, etc.) but also more akin to *languaging,* or what I understand as the continually changing or attempting to make meaning in relation to others and the environment, across visual perception, non-verbal sonic experiences, chemical reactions, autonomic and somatic processes, ritual and ceremony, algorithmic recipes,

intimacy and sexuality, and ultimately any register of experience through internal (including psychical) or external impinging and impinged upon sensorial being.

My understanding of language is inspired not only by my fine/studio arts but also by my practical background in applied sociocritical linguistics, particularly tensions emergent of a widely popular model of linking language and perception: the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Pavlenko (2014) demonstrates that while this concept has proliferated across linguistics, other disciplines, and popular cultures, it has in fact been misinterpreted. The hypothesis has been widely conflated with linguistic determinism: that the structure of a language *determines* a 'native speaker's' (meaning a speaker who thinks primarily in that language) perception and categorization of experience (e.g., how one sees or does not see the world and their emergent cognitive abilities). Pavlenko (2014) demonstrates that such a misinterpretation has historically given rise to toxic racial nationalisms and erases Sapir and Whorf's emphasis on the possibility and potential peacebuilding of commensurability and exchange of worldview and perception between languages. My relational intention of re-storying language here, however, is to suggest that (in accordance with an ecological kinship worldview of belonging), no language is superior to another, more relationally 'pure' than another, or more potentially hegemonic. Considering language as a non-disciplinary practice of storytelling and shared, future-forming power, I also suggest to my reader that no medium of language is superior across a relational ecology.

Framing my dissertation through a lens of futurity as informed by Indigenous literature and storytelling as open to myself and all my relations and the languages they might teach me is a deeply, relationally, political act. Research as storying spirit, academic and otherwise, borne of storytelling grounds anyone who cares to listen in an unbound future and offers opportunities to perceive what such futures and their constituting relationships might look like. I do not forget how early European negotiators of the first Indigenous-newcomer Treaties on Turtle Island in fact unlearned enough of their ideas of contracts to extract the language of relationality and kinship necessary to convince First Peoples to enter into covenants which the newcomer negotiators never intended to honour (Martin, 2023). However, I have found that many (well-meaning) scholars and educators leveraging the language of ethical relationality and the continual need to "unlearn" so-called settler colonial histories and ways of relating. These authors often leave vacant what should or could be relearned. Even when Indigenous scholars openly invite non-Indigenous readers, educators, and academics into futurities of shared

responsibility and kinship, typical Canadian academics abrogate their human potential for relationality by generating more knowledge about being relationally deficient settlers (see Chapter 2). Ironically, Canadian educational academia has appropriated Indigenous voices towards maintaining the stasis of an essentialized Indigenous-non-Indigenous binary — a stasis that is beneficial to the hierarchical, class-stratifying, extractive, and hypercapitalist lifeways decolonial scholars ostensibly critique. If we (as non-Indigenous scholars and educators) remain perpetually doubtful of our human capacity to relate and only represent what our shortcomings are, we can continue to live and relate in the same toxic colonial and increasingly hypercapitalist ways while benefiting from Indigenous racism, dispossession, and the unsustainability of contemporary academia: we can use words like 'relationality,' 'spirit,' and 'heart' without taking seriously (and showing our readers and students) what we might mean and how these meanings could in fact interrupt and transform our daily colonial lives, continuing to publish or perish, support neoliberal social hierarchies, and perpetuate, through the very ways in which we represent in research and enact in teaching, knowledge as still in service to ultimately unsustainable ways of being human. Meanwhile, as my research participants worry, Indigenous bodies are being appropriated as human resource to validate assimilative Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) policies that alienate Indigenous scholars and are readily abandoned when the bottom line is at stake. I thus consider Indigenous expressions of being outside a hierarchical framework of low or high intellectual merit, and so, as I leave open at the end of this introduction chapter, not only implicate but also include myself in and worthy of relational futurities as much as any human being. Across my dissertation I read and relate my relational experiences with academic literature, my research participants, and my own reflexive identity as the stories that they are. I call for a needed and, hopefully somewhat successfully demonstrated in the limitations of a colonial document(s) such as my dissertation, intersubjective transformation beyond the colonial material and imaginative boundaries of what educational futurities could be.

Unsurprisingly, then, Justice (2018) cites Howe in his preface to *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. For Justice, the heart of Indigenous literatures is a relational power, for they help "bridge the gap of human imagination between one another, between other human communities, and between us and other-than-human beings. Fundamentally, they affirm Indigenous presence—and our present" (p. xix). At the same time, however, such literacies

“articulate lived truths and imaginative possibilities through spoken, written, and inscribed forms and *project them into a meaningful future* [emphasis added]” (p. xviii). Literatures of futurities are critical to a project such as mine, as such literacies, contemporarily, “are at least as concerned with developing or articulating relationships with, among, and between Indigenous readers as they are with communicating our humanity to colonial society, if not more so” (p. xix). Critically, “these literary works offer us insight and sometimes helpful pathways for maintaining, rebuilding, or even simply establishing these meaningful connections” (p. xix). Of particular interest to this thesis is Justice's concept of “wonderworks" which gesture, “imperfectly, toward other ways of being in the world, and [remind] us that the way things are is not how they have always been, nor is it how they must be” (2018, p. 152). The relational questions that Justice sees at the heart of Indigenous literatures — How do we learn to be human? How do we become good relatives? How do we become good ancestors? How do we learn to live together? — are then arguably futuristic and deeply curricular. These are also questions I have now begun to ask now that I have started a practice of being open to perceiving and representing spirit as integral to data.

Referencing Justice (2018), Métis author and scholar Chelsea Vowel (2020) considers carefully how colonial language(s) and cultural production continuously positions Indigenous storytelling in relation to “whitestream literary [and academic] traditions rather than embracing the holistic nature of Indigenous ontologies”—effectively emphasizing perpetual dualities. Vowel considers Justice’s concept of wonderworks as a means of avoiding “both the relegation of stories to mere fantasy and the rigid dichotomy of real versus unreal” (p. 106). In the context of research and academic production, “real” includes concepts of truth, validity, and, ultimately, value. Of particular but broadly implicating interest to my doctoral work are ideas about data and what could be considered “real” data. Further, the question of data representation is central: if we take seriously Indigenous ways of knowing-being-doing — which, although informed by vast and diverse cosmologies, all clearly imply that we collectively as a human species “need a new story” (Donald, 2021) — how might we relate our data in a reciprocally and renewed/ing ethical manner?

All of us as human beings are caught in a present and seemingly predetermined future trajectory in which our students are not only terrified by the world they will inherit (van Kessel et al., 2020) but also succumbing to fatalism — dreaming a world into being where their lives

will ultimately not matter, and so believing that their care for the Earth, never mind each other, is futile (Phillips, 2020). What may be left to slowly (and perhaps too slowly) unite us is a global existential crisis of survival. Survival, of course, is one of the myriad onto-epistemological nexuses that Indigenous Peoples, here on Turtle Island and globally, know a great deal about. However, 'survival' here is multivalent and includes an enduring sense of nonlinear temporality that opens vital speculative capacities through which all humans might need to learn or relearn from. As Vowel (2020) notes:

> Given the way in which Indigenous peoples are so often forced to reactively hyper-focus on the present and day-to-day survival, having some space to cast ourselves as far into the future is vital and potentially emancipatory. Setting these stories in contexts that explicitly reject [all forms of enduring colonial oppressions] is one way to think about how to overcome colonial logics. This work can and must be done in a variety of mediums; literature, music, film, art, fashion, video games, and so on. (p. 11)

Rather than "whitestreaming" concepts of survival (e.g., primitivizing limitation vs. progressive prosperity) as existentially impoverished, I borrow from Anishinaabe-European Indigenous Futurism author and scholar Grace Dillon's (2012) onto-epistemology of the "Native slipstream." Dillon argues that this perceptual and representational technology is inherent to contemporary Indigenous storytelling and has been inherited from traditional practices, transformed, as all traditions are, for the needs of the present, including the need to exceed colonial bindings of imagination. As a practice, "Native slipstream exploits the possibilities of multiverses by reshaping time travel. Ultimately, […] it allows authors to recover the Native space of the past, to bring it to the attention of contemporary readers, and to build better futures" (Dillon, 2012, p. 6). It is an onto-epistemological enmeshment of writer and reader that first "provides a nonlinear way of thinking through complex cultural tensions" such as contested histories and ways of knowing while "conveying the very real psychological experience of slipping into various levels of awareness and consciousness" across deep and ancient registers of time, space, matter, and relationships (Dillon, 2012, pp. 16-17).

Dissolving the arbitrary, colonial categorical boundaries such as past/future, story/fact, natural/technological, Indigenous/non-Indigenous, slipstreaming representation can produce evocative stories that re-enflesh the typically relationally-denuded histories such as those of the

early European colonization of Turtle Island. As Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko (2012) slipstreams to weave history, spirit, memory, nature, and humanity together:

> But from the beginning of the Americas, outsiders had sensed their Christianity was somehow inadequate in the face of the immensely powerful and splendid spirit beings who inhabited the vastness of the Americas. The Europeans had not been able to sleep soundly on the American continents, not even with a full military guard. They had suffered from nightmares and frequently claimed to see devils and ghosts. Cortés's men had feared the medicine and the procedures they had brought with them from Europe might lack power on New World soil; almost immediately, the wounded Europeans had begun to dress their wounds in the fat of slain Indians. (p. 219)

I chose this excerpt because it cuts through a great amount of discourse to an evocative and provocative sense of relationship, its degradation, and ultimate denial: that displacement, fear, and worldview destabilization and/or estrangement was part and parcel of past and present colonial violence. In other words, perhaps the ways of relating to one another and the more-than-human world, imported by (at the time) self-justified humans, were ultimately toxic to and incommensurate with the place (and all of its constituting relations) supposedly discovered. Not intrinsically, I should stress — many subsequent newcomers to Turtle Island were in fact seeking a life in which they could be more than chattel — but that in a long moment of worldview collision and vulnerability, the meaning and terms of survival became inhumane.

My intention here is not to disregard the real and vast violence that Indigenous Peoples have and continue to experience, but to foreground that such violence was and is also imaginative or epistemological — creating and sustaining mythologies of savage (or primitive/historical/mystical) Indigenous monsters (or ignorant wards of the Canadian state) that deny their humanity and reconfigure their subjectivities into objects of fear, disgust, and ultimately distrust. Similarly, and more recently, Métis author Cherie Dimaline (2017), as I have explored elsewhere (Phillips & Ng-A-Fook, 2024), uses the metonym of bone marrow to intertwine the physical and epistemological exploitation of Indigenous bodies and ways of knowing; these extractive mental and physical moves continue in academia and wider culture. Such a denial of relation — that we are not relatives and so can commodify each other — fueled kinds and scales of violence that would have been (as they mostly are now) seen to most Europeans at the time as unthinkably barbaric (Kiger, 2018).

Leslie Marmon Silko's (2012) example of slipstreaming, however, also suggests what anti-colonial AI ethicist Rachel Adams (2021) sees as a vital perspective in our present moment when all of our futurities are based on Eurocentric and Anthropocentric notions of a world domination by humans, and neo-Darwinian assumptions that those who do not fit into this future are not worthy of it. Adams (2021) contends that "recognizing [i.e., perceiving] that the undoing of coloniality was always a possibility of the original event of conquest—that it always could have been otherwise—simultaneously reinforces the possibility of different futures to come" (p. 191).

My doctoral project is therefore not just a deeply political act but an ethical, aesthetic actualization of my biological, social, spiritual self in relation to my research 'topic' and subjects. Across my 4-year doctoral project, I have sought to understand and make felt how education scholars and educators might fully attend to the implications of relationality in our work, including how we might honour the relationality of our data, from literature review and theorization, collection, analysis, and re/presentation, through knowledge dissemination, to implementation in teaching. I take Truth and Reconciliation teacher education research and practice as a particularly relational subject, listening to both unlearn and relearn from its voices deeply complexly and implicating notions of relationality and ultimately data. I have begun to wonder if I have always had the potential for and through my doctoral project consciously germinated what polymath Elder Duke Redbird of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation describes as a "strawberry heart" (Pitt-Clark, 2022, para. 2).

Saying "strawberry heart" in Anishinaabemowin would perhaps be redundant, as the strawberry is better known as 'ode-min' or "heartberry." Strawberries are thus the eco-symbolic embodiment of the concept of 'Debwewin' in Anishinaabemowin, and so synonymous with both 'Truth' and 'heartbeat' (Redbird, 2022). This heart-truth grows in the traditional "fifth canopy" in the Anishinaabe relational forest ecology, which includes all edible material found on the surface of the ground. Not only is the ground level where many medicines are found, but also where "we sort the poison ivies from the good ivies, the poison oaks from the good oaks, the mushrooms from the toadstools" (Redbird, 2022, para. 6). Redbird relates that "truth is always in accord with fact and reality", but that this reality includes the relational fact that strawberries are teachers and that reality is always constituted of deeply ecological relationships. The strawberry is unlike other fruit, like humans are distinct but related to all other species, in that their seeds are

on the surface; humans, like these seeds, occupy the surface of the Earth and are the seeds of her and her future. Elsewhere (Pitt-Clark, 2022, para. 4), Redbird has noted that universities could be described as strawberries of knowledge "that require the human heart with the desire for the truth to be nourishing and successful". However, I find this strawberry heart quickly consumed and easily digested through the beauty and worldview imprecision of such words, such that its seeds pass through scholarly ears before they might germinate and so be felt and honoured in future-facing research and teaching. As I explore later in my manuscripts, what is typically consumed, but not honoured by academia, is a worldview that understands notions of "success" differently than what is typically expressed in "a curriculum that seeks to ready students for a job market and not for life as citizens in a still-colonized land" (Kovach, 2013, p. 112). "Success," in a strawberry heart, is just as concerned with learning and performing an embodied ethics of truth that would benefit our present selves as much as those that would nourish all of our relatives, human and more-than, seven generations into the future — and so open to truths that may yet to be born beyond the temporal frames of our present humanity. A strawberry heart bears fruit to nourish a future, which may mean both maintaining a present balance and engendering a new, future truth, of more nourishing strawberries.

And so, does such a strawberry heart and its seeds find nourishing ground across universities, never mind K-12 schooling, here in what some of us call Canada — or perhaps the place we should rightly call Turtle Island? Throughout my dissertation research undertaken above the arbitrary northern divide of Turtle Island, I do not believe that it is. Enduring in its offer of love, however, the shared (if fractured) bio-social-spiritual sphere we find ourselves in today, with all its/our crises and terrible denials of relationships, calls on us collectively as a privileged species or global human community to act in kinship with each other and all other entities. And so, by logical and faithful extension, ways of theorizing, teaching, and representing our relationships—beyond our present limitations of relationships—must be brought into kinship, necessary for finding kinship in the flesh.

Place, Placelessness, and the Data of Being Somewhere In-Between

As Pirbhai-Illich et al. (2024) teach me through their own introductions to readers, my kinship—including its enfleshed spirit—is integral to any "de/colonial" project, transforming "positionality" or typical disclaimer of subjectivity/personal limitation or bias into a more relational "locus of enunciation" (after Mignolo, 2007). Pirbhai-Illich (racialized non-white first-

generation settler Canadian), Martin (middle-class Anglo-Saxon British), and Pete (Nehiyaw/Dakota/Saulteaux of the Little Pine First Nation) insert an oblique slash in 'de/colonizing' to continually foreground the understanding that there are no "pure" decolonizing spaces, because any project hoping to undue colonialism is always in relationship to colonizing forces. I see resonance with this deep ethical relational acknowledgement in Kanaka Maoli scholar Kēhaulani Kauanui's (2016) arguments that "a substantive engagement with settler colonialism also demands a deep rethinking of the associated concept of indigeneity—distinct from race, ethnicity, culture, and nation(ality)", even as most scholarship deploying settler colonial studies frameworks is silent on this implication (p. 1). I follow Paradies (2020) who argues that truth telling means telling the unsettling truth about the dangers of modernity for global life, including its "deeply atrophied capacity" for relationality while similarly troubling a linear sense of decolonization (p. 439). Paradies (2020) reaches a similar realization about who might be included as active and equal participants in a more just future for all of our relations: "Outside of modern identity categories ([e.g.,] Indigenous versus non-Indigenous)", a relational project of de/coloniality is a "praxis of living" open to whoever wants to do it and does not preclude the possibility of settlers 'becoming' Indigenous or Indigenous Peoples becoming 'settlers,' but rather sees all beings responsible for "rupturing an insistent and incessant modernity" and remembering that truth is about a shard future as much as it is about the past (p. 442). And so, I wonder, not just who am I but where am I, in academia, and further in relation to other human and more-than-human kin? I wonder how I might find a means of what Métis writer Jo-Ann Episkenew (2009) calls "taking back our spirits." I do have *a* spirit while I also feel a relationship *with* and *of* spirit. This much I can say is true about me, even if I am typically (academically) perceived to come from a particularly generic locus of enunciation.

Pirbhai-Illich et al. (2024) stress that invoking positionality in a relational de/colonizing way means being explicit about our "often hidden or silenced" histories and interactions with how the complexly relational world we live in actually works (p. 4). Without doing so, we lose sight of how, while within the "colonial matrix", we each come from a different place and time. It is within this difference, however, that colonial power is enacted or challenged (see also Mignolo, 2000). This difference is always-already a matter of representation. The colonial limitations of our present moment and our responsibilities to future descendants' wellbeing require us to re-imagine what we mean by "justice" — justice as it might be understood beyond

colonial notions of "equity, diversity, and inclusion" and so what justice might mean if we work to "attach meaning to that word, rather than the meanings of the [neoliberal] mainstream" (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2024, pp. 18-19).

More presently on the lands that have traditionally cared for and been (and continue to be) cared for by the Algonquin Nations, now known as Ottawa, I have been taught by my settler professors that I am an uninvited guest on unceded territory. I have been schooled to identify as a white settler of privilege who must remain in a humbled and continually unsettled space (not place) of discomfort (e.g., how Regan, 2010, is typically but incompletely quoted). While I am aware daily that I benefit from settler privilege by virtue of my pale skin, generic name, and grasp of English and hegemonic Anglophone culture, I presently question the lack of kinship in my education and the hegemonic frameworks of relational place (or lack thereof) I am ostensibly afforded by those I am called to understand as teachers. Most importantly, I feel that I am not usually permitted, by virtue of my genetics or appearance, to theorize in affection and affinity with my human relatives and more-than-human kin. I am discursively and increasingly materially denied kinship and acknowledgement of my spirit and relationship with spirit beyond private inward experience. I feel that I am expected to keep invisible much of what I think we require methodologically. Yet, privatization of spirit puts me into an ethical relational bind through which I can only escape by reclaiming and deprivatizing my own spirit and at least document how my spirit moves through and is moved by what I read (Chapter 2) and the data I am offered (Chapter 3 and 4).

And so I feel it critical to emphasize: my mind, body, and spirit want nothing more than to see a full relational resurgence on the lands that now nourish me — Turtle Island and beyond — including not just taking seriously, equal, and sovereign Indigenous communities, knowledges and ways of being, but also further entrusting the keepers and practitioners of these knowledges with the governance of our collective human and more-than-human lifeways and latent covenants into the next seven generations, beyond and across our Turtle's back. I have kept alive in my heart my own ideas of 'future dreaming' and critical futurisms (Phillips, 2021b), through which we, or at least I, might find affinity across difference with others whose experiences I cannot claim to know, but might yet relate to through aesthetic engagement. As Elder Duke Redbird ([1960] 2019; personal communication, November 13, 2024) has taught me, today no other peoples are as transient or nomadic as white citizens, in the sense that as a white-embodied

human being one can be as nomadic as some pre-contact Indigenous Peoples. This freedom, however, should be imbued with a broad sense of responsibility across all the places I might traverse. I must now then attend to myself, my own data, and how its inspiriting has informed my doctoral project.

First, I am neither an Englishman nor the endowed product of middle-class settler privilege: in fact, I am the intergenerational result of England's first program of colonization: I am Welsh. I am also famined-Irish. However, because of my queerness and mother's Eastern European refugee origins, I was disowned by my paternal relatives, and then ultimately by my own immediate family. (Even my first name is personally ambivalent; I was named Patrick to appease the matriarchs of my father's Irish line, a gesture that would prove counterproductive). I came to Ottawa effectively orphaned, with no familial support or prospect of inheritance. I theorize and empathize from such a physical 'place' or kinship origin that has largely cast me into psychical 'placelessness.' The relevance of this note to this paper is that I am often, from my perspective, assumed to come from a comfortable middle-class settler background because I can evidently think and write at an advanced level in English. I offer that this is, ironically, colonial and violent thinking. My kin and I have done and sacrificed much to *survive*. I have nonetheless always, I think, held an intimate if ambivalent attunement to place, relatively unique to my own loci of being.

My Slavic mother, who taught me my now-lost first language, was born a displaced person in a post-WWII refugee camp — granted no birth nationality — and her orphaned and displaced parents had no other viable choice but to immigrate to Canada, as their homelands were occupied and their histories and kin obliterated. I am an intergenerational product of such trauma. My grandfather, Jozef Ferdynus, was born an ethnic and linguistic minority in what was then Austria. He was first displaced from his Sorbian homelands into Poland during the rise of fascism and annexation (colonization) of Austria by Nazi Germany. In Poland, he found himself orphaned and homeless — to survive, he became the indentured farm hand to a Polish family and took on their name. Further displaced by Germany's invasion of Poland, he survived by joining the Polish resistance and applied his education (in language and science) to sabotage Nazi tanks and munitions.

In the aftermath of the war, my grandfather met my grandmother, Jozefa Lisek, daughter of Petronela Gazda (literally "farmer" or "tender" "of the earth"), from a place that no longer

exists on a map. Like Polish-Canadian conservationist Katarzyna Nowak, I in part originate from "beyond the river Bug." As Nowak relates (2020), "Like many borderlands, the Bug River [pronounced most accurately as "Booch" or "Boogch"] region has been described by environmental scientists as 'hardly impacted by human activities.' It's of high biological diversity value, called 'a cornerstone of the Pan European Ecological Network' and has been proposed for designation as a trilateral biosphere reserve" (para. 9). However, such a mechanistic ecological view misses a deeper relationality. Nowak (2020) fills me in:

> The River Bug's 481 miles (774 kilometers) have shaped the demarcation of East and West. This is because the Curzon Line—used in 1919 to divide Poland and Soviet Russia—follows, in parts, the River Bug. The line was brought back in the Second World War as a border between German-occupied Poland and Russian Red Army forces. (para. 6)

This means that circa 1939-41, my grandmother, then a vagrant of an eastern Polish city, was boxed up in a railcar and sent to lands west of the Bug — after she became the sole survivor of her family's elimination by the Nazis, survived the ethnic cleansing of the Polish population by Ukrainian Nationalists under Soviet occupation, and finally swept up in the Soviet deportation of displaced Poles and Jews into Nazi-occupied lands west if the Bug. According to her testimony, a squad of Nazi officers arrived on her family's farm one sunny autumn day and declared that her family had to vacate the land. My great-grandfather refused and brandished his pitchfork. The Nazis responded by murdering my grandmother's entire family, including several siblings, in cold blood; my grandmother reportedly escaped by fleeing into the countryside — she was only 1.25 meters (4'1") tall and lived up to her family's name: 'little fox.' She would later meet my grandfather and conceive my mother in a refugee camp in southern Germany, after doing much to survive in a German munitions factory. This means also that my maternal homelands no longer exist as they did or as places I can physically find myself: my grandfather's ancestral lands are occupied by Germany (presently becoming more fascist again) and my grandmother's ancestral lands are part of Oligarchic Russia (or will be if Ukraine falls again) and have had any physical reminder of their ancestral inhabitants erased.

My materialization on Turtle Island thus occurred without any choice on the part of my maternal ancestors. My maternal grandfather worked several years on the northern Ontario railways (as in breaking stone and laying tracks) and then in the Inco mines of Sudbury in order

to pay the tax required to bring my mother and grandmother to Canada. My mother grew up in Sudbury in a house built by my grandfather, a house that did not have running water until my mother was 16. My mother's most cherished memories were of the lakes and forests of those lands. The "north" of Ontario has always been a psychical and physical place that has had the most concrete sense of kinship for me. Being "Canadian" has never been an easy identification for me, as the oral histories of my mother's family always reminded me that my origins were a void of place, and my future could always cast me as placeless, while also attuned me to reverence of place because of this intergenerational loss.

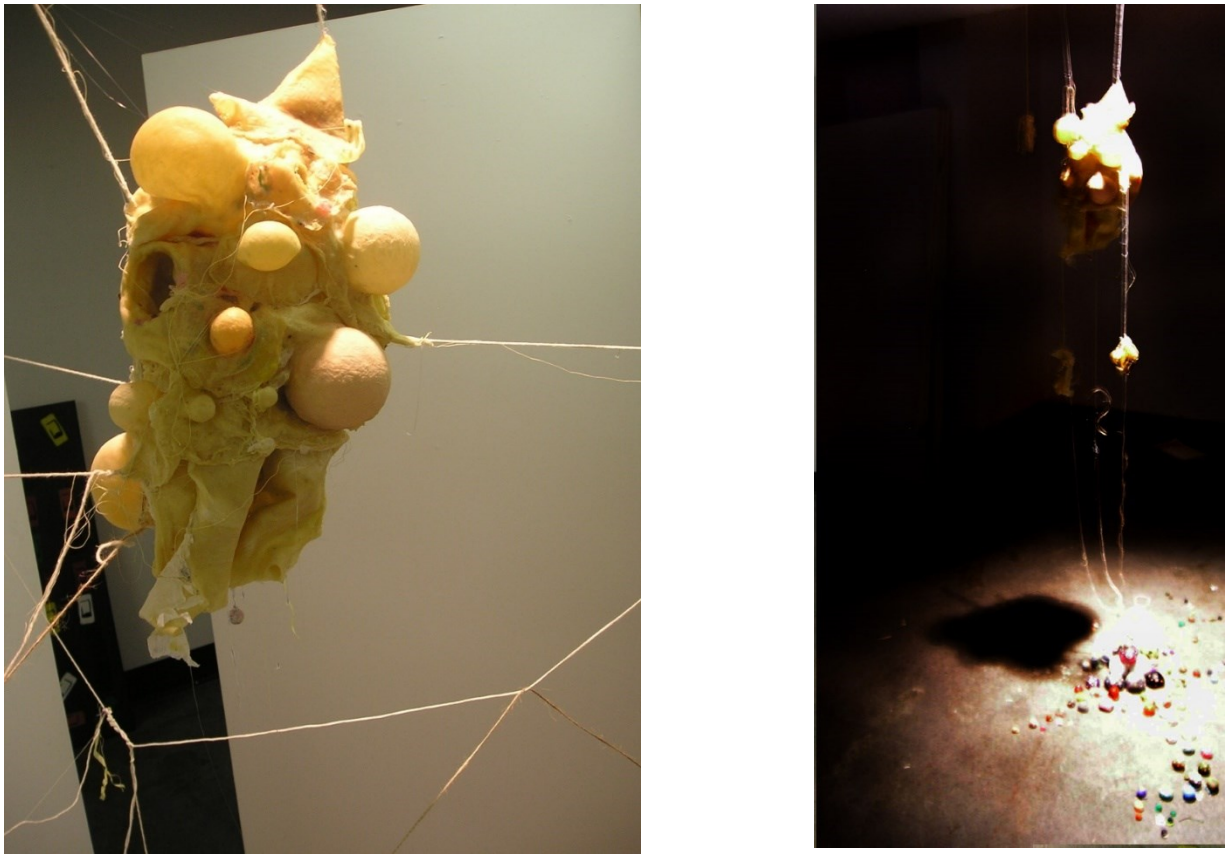
My father was born to Monica McManus and Edward Phillips, one Irish Catholic and one Protestant Welsh, respectfully but certainly not respectful of each other. Both descended from multigenerational settler landowners in southern Ontario. My Phillips line is entirely agrarian — I have traced my lineage back to Monmouthshire, Wales, back as far as the Kingdom of Gwent, when Wales was ruled by Scandinavian invaders. My Phillips ancestors were all farmers, sans a few radical early Christian evangelicals like Peregrine Phillips (circa. 1400s) and perhaps some early chroniclers of Arthurian legends, and were ultimately displaced by British colonial industrialization. My Irish McManus line, though originally displaced by the great famine from the region of County Cork, accrued a great deal of settler wealth in what we now call Ontario, particularly the areas around London. Monica grew up with ponies and her eldest sister kept peacocks on her gated estate overlooking the picturesque cliffs of Lake Erie. Monica, the youngest daughter of her family, however, harboured deep resentment for anything not "pure Irish" — including her curiously kinky hair, which she attributed to her grandmother. According to Monica, her grandmother was in fact purchased, "a Moor". I did see photographic evidence of a commensurate complexion. As a child of her middle son who also inherited her most hated attribute and further transgressed by marrying a Pole, however, I was always told that I was not family — that I "should have been aborted." I am not paraphrasing. Here I will spare my reader an accounting of my own adolescence, but I will summarize: I grew up in an incredibly emotionally and physically abusive household inhabited by a hateful alcoholic "father"; I spent a great amount of time either locked in a room or left wandering on my own across the city of Toronto; I experienced extensive gaps in my education sometimes spanning several years of school absence; I learned to defend myself and mitigate harm to myself from my first words and

movements. The only cherished memories I have of my mostly feral adolescence were of the more-than-human world.

My earliest teachers were the more-than-human entities that I found while a vagrant bastard child wandering what remains of the Black Oak Savannah of Toronto (Bloor West/Swansea/High Park), and then the encrusted colonial history of Old/Downtown Toronto. My sense of place was always in relation with my proximity to my more-than-human relations along the Humber and Don rivers, the bounding shore of Lake Ontario, and the ravines in-between. I felt and continually return to a deep sense of kinship with the smallest of my relatives, including many that most people abhor or do not acknowledge as living, animate relatives, such as insects, fungi, theories or cultural concepts. Across Figures 1 through 16, I share some of my own attempts to contemplate these relations from across the spaces, places, and temporal arrangements I have navigated, including their inherent spirit, and my spirit's relation to them.

Figure 1 & 2

Patrick Materializing Cuteness and Its Origins



Note. Patrick Phillips, *Moe (kawaii)*, multimedia installation, 2005.

Figure 3

Patrick Appreciating and Amplifying the Beauty of Decay

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Decay*, manually double exposed hand-printed colour photograph from original film negatives, 10 x 8 inches, 2005.

Figure 4

Patrick Feeling Through Water as Kin

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Water*, mixed media on wood panel, 12x14”, 2023.

Figure 5

Patrick Feeling Across Water for His Distant Kin

Note. Detail from *Whalefall*, incomplete pastel and acrylic painting on canvas, Patrick Phillips, 2016-present.

Figure 6

Patrick Tracing the Threads of His Insect Kin Through Remembered Contours

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Dobsonfly*. Wax pencil on paper, approx. 8x11”, 2021.

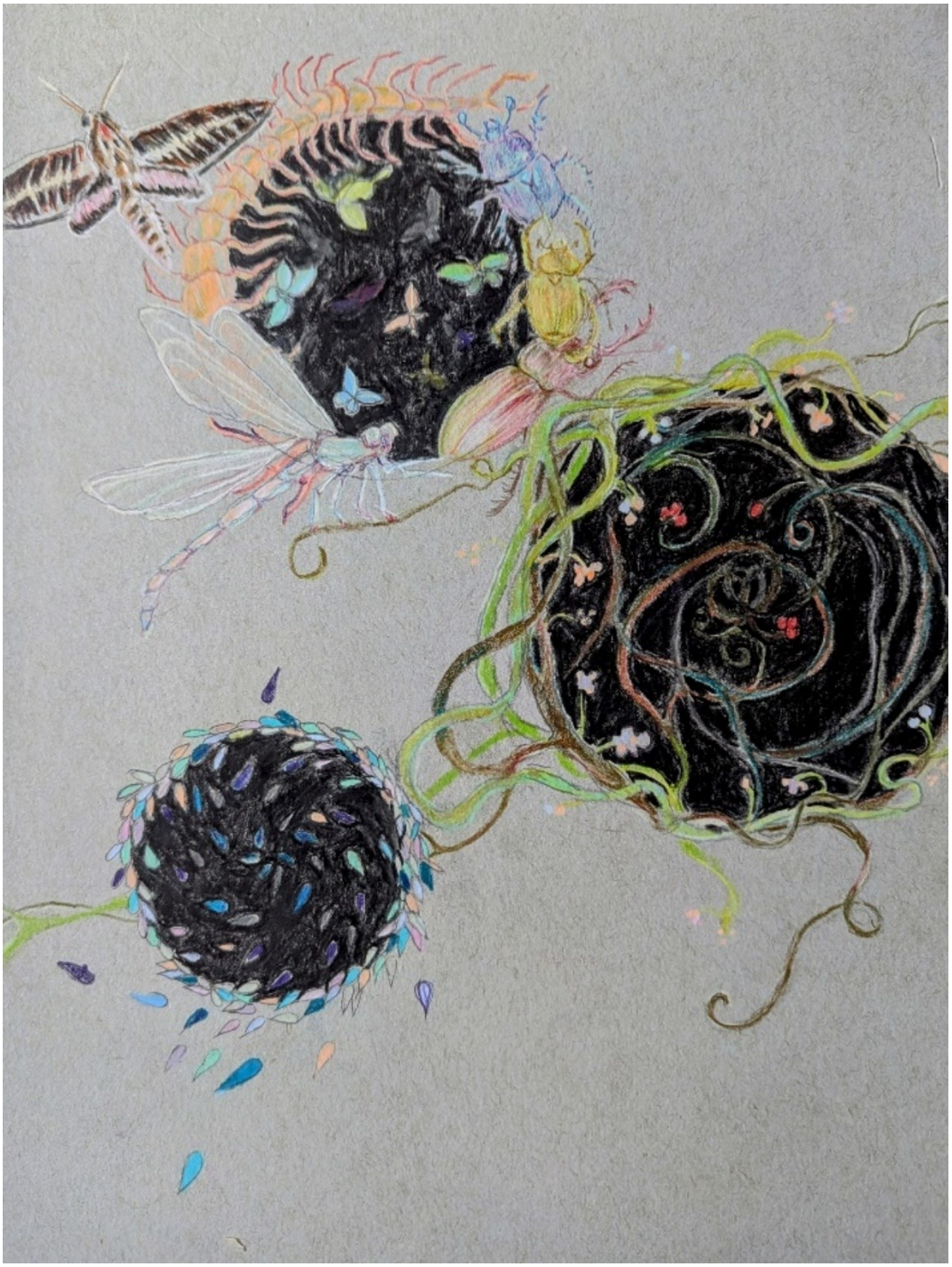
Figure 7

Patrick Feeling Through the Relationality of Cicadas

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Cicada*, unfinished mixed media painting on canvas, approx. 12x18”, 2023-present.

Figure 8

Patrick Experimenting Through Describing What He Later Termed Relational Lacunae



Note. Patrick Phillips, *Lacunae*, unfinished concept drawing, wax pencil on paper, 8x11”, 2024.

Figure 9

Patrick Gilding the Relational Beauty of Bark Beetle 'Galleries'

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Untitled*, mixed media on found tree bark etched by bark beetles, 2019-2020.

Figure 10

Patrick Tracing Light and its Dormant Life in Goldenrod Seeds

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Untitled*, Digital SLR photograph of Goldenrod along Green's Creek, Ottawa, c. 2023.

Figure 11

Patrick Observing the Smallest Flying Kin Visiting His Garden in Winter

Note. Patrick Phillips, *Untitled (Song Sparrow for Liam)*, wax pencil on paper, approx. 8x11”, 2022.

Figure 12

Patrick's Seeing Living Water (Frost Flowers) at -22 Celsius, Green's Creek, Ottawa, 2022

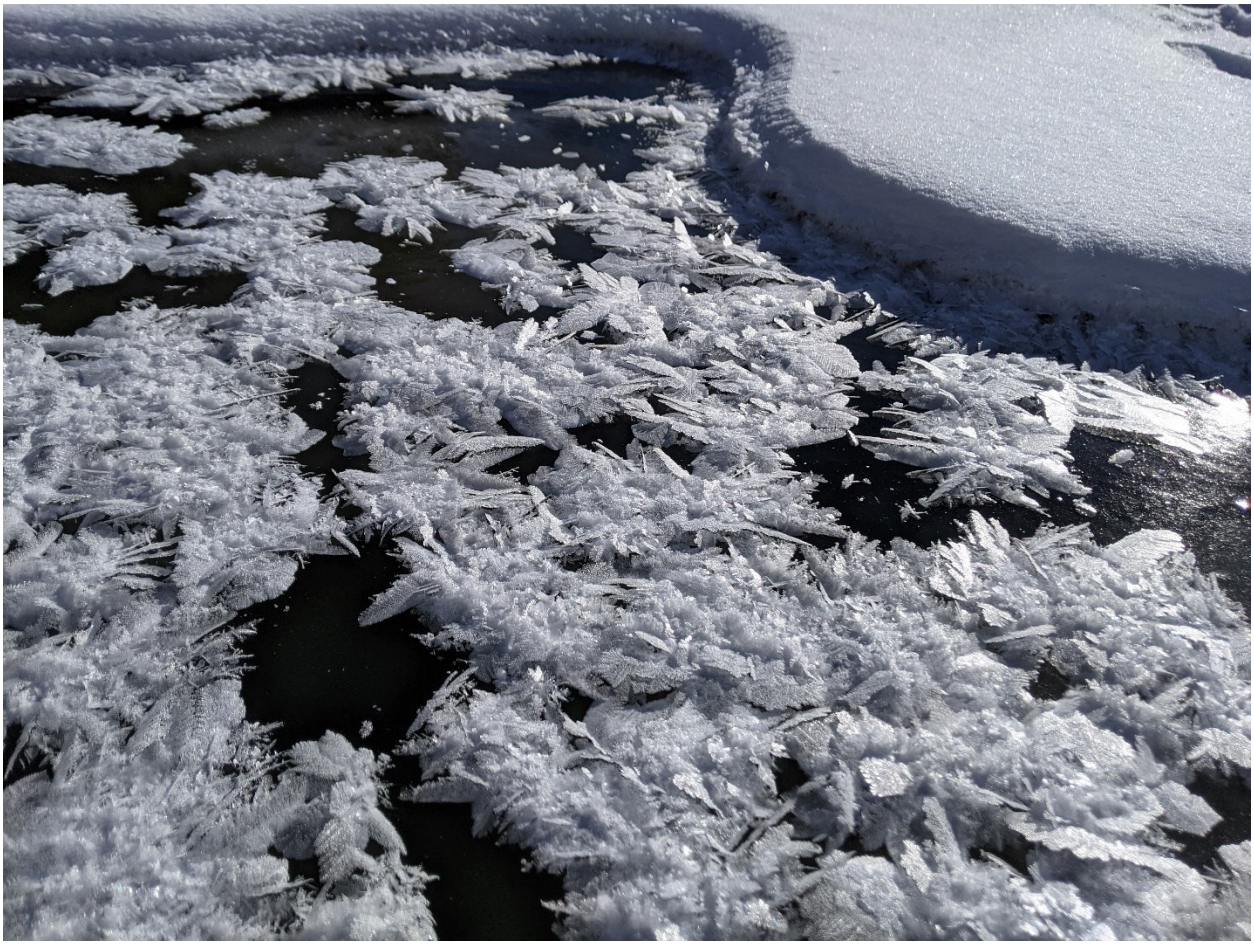


Figure 13

Patrick Seeing the Earth's Slow Breath in Winter Water, Green's Creek, Ottawa, 2022

Figure 14

Patrick Noticing All the Moving, Interconnected/ing Relatives in Winter, 2023

Figure 15

Patrick Seeing Sky and Water Together as Kindred Entities, Somewhere Over the Atlantic Ocean, 2025

Figure 16

Patrick Cherishing Sunlight Through One of the World's Largest Single-celled Organisms, Valonia Ventricosa, 2025

Note. Core to my relationality, I further did not see as a child, and presently do not see, my more-than-human relatives as separate or lesser than all the plant or otherwise photosynthetic life around me, from a single cell to our star, the Sun.

Before the death of my paternal grandmother and so the final break between my immediate family and my abusive father's extended family, I would sometimes find myself 'up north' for a month to six weeks at a time, though never in the same place. Over these few but blessed summers, I spent my entire day and evening outside: swimming in lakes, wandering through forests and meadows and shoreline habitats and meeting all the relations I could find, and fishing for my dinner every night. Through these experiences, between city and so-called wilderness, I felt little separation between land, sky, water, and even something that I understand as spirit or at least its pulse. In these places is where I remember feeling loved; unlike my lonely

existence during the school year, my mother would teach me the painting skills she learned from her father, and showed me her inherited reverence for land, water, sky, and all their attending kin while weaving her family's story across our encounters with insect, fish, bird, and so on — perhaps intertwining grief with love of place (there, here, or elsewhere) and a future despite loss.

Unfortunately, my ability to name and describe the lifeways and inspirited (by my own spirit) ecological kinship entanglements with all the relatives I can see, is often, as I discuss shortly, seen as a sign of unfortunate autism, even by PhDs crowned by EDID positions and salaries. Yet core to my relationality is that I feel a kind of care coursing through the freshest life through to the mustiest death around me. I would now categorize my artistic, neurodivergent aesthetic as pan-ecophilic — expressing love for ecologies, broadly construed.

I render these highly summarized genealogical disclosures not to dump trauma into my writing (or romanticize it) but to acknowledge that trauma and love are together a great and intersectional vibrating core to my being and spirit. Western/positivistic science has only recently begun to understand that trauma is embodied deeply enough that it can be passed down generationally through human biology. Some species or populations of animals are indelibly trauma-informed; humans are just as vulnerable. In fact, some scientists argue that permanent biological differences (including neurology) caused by trauma (including trauma from WWII and human displacement) can be passed down for as many as seven generations — an interesting coincidence with what a strawberry heart must know to be true. And my brief storying here does not even address my own adolescence, which was primarily physically and emotionally traumatic. In a sense, and through senses, I thus assert that I understand, through my bodily experiences, intergenerational harm, what it can mean to survive, but also what it means to still relate to hope and love in ways that exceed how I was educated by some fellow humans.

I feel that I am frequently and paradigmatically invisibilized as a particular human being with a particular way of experiencing the world. I am frequently misgendered (through relational assumptions rather than pronouns) in the places/spaces of academia. I am a queer man but do not ascribe to man/woman binaries; my history of experience with gender and sexuality is deep, sometimes cold and dark, and a complicated conversation in and of itself. I have survived rape, and this survival in the face of limited socioeconomic survival options was in fact the driving force behind my migration to Ottawa from Toronto, where I was born and matured, but not necessarily always nurtured by humans.

I also live through real barriers of stigma around my disclosed trauma, which therefore makes me disabled, including several intersecting invisible physical disabilities. I have experienced exclusion and undermining based on disclosure of my disability and socioeconomic vulnerability by all levels of academia. My othering is further compounded when I reveal that my cognitive patterns are not normative or slip in the carefully practiced masking of my neurodivergence.

I distinguish my neurodivergence from disability because I do not wish to re/present neurodivergence as pathologized being. However, as a self-professed alien-brained unicorn-pangolin, I am often marginalized in my everyday life and academic interactions. Relevant to this paper, I have found that my neurodivergence gifts me a deep sense of ethics, justice (or injustice) and am intrinsically motivated into intense curiosity and need to understand, broadly construed. This, I feel, has been frequently interpreted by friends and colleagues as an aggressive, colonial mind. I offer instead that my intentions of understanding always include the empathetic: feelings, hopes, fears, and even (and everyday) love for someone/thing newly encountered. My entire way of being in this settler colonial world has been a life-long self-study at how to bridge my ways of seeing and communicating with a normative, and as I would learn through my doctoral journey, relationally disabling culture.

So, as an uninvited but orphaned displaced nomad, I am perhaps what I might call an ethical vagrant of place and associated kinships. Interdisciplinary researcher Bryan Yazell (2023) suggests that the concept of the vagrant has across western culture denoted both a person physically and psychically marginal to the socioeconomic status quo, but also a potentially industrious identity who might find, or feel out, ways of living outside of prevailing hierarchical institutions and material arrangements. I presently feel that I am living such a life, academically and otherwise.

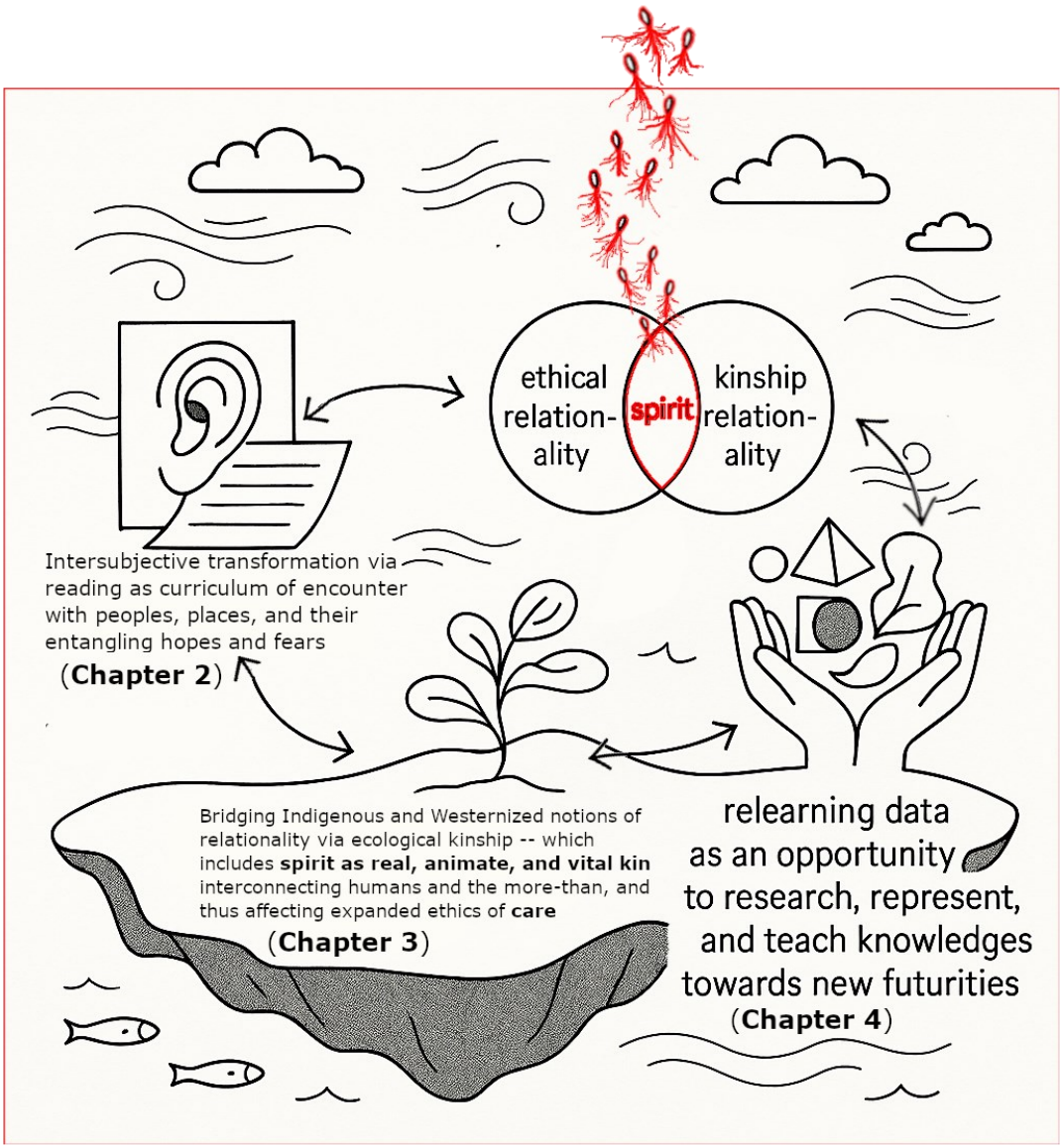
Relearning Data: A Map for My Reader

In humble offering to my reader and future relatives, I have illustrated in Figure 17 my thesis-by-article dissertation as a cohesive, interdependent, and non-linear host (all chapters) of simultaneously stand-alone documents (Chapters 2 through 4). Although the diagram is playful and simple in its stylization, all of my choices were intentional towards an aesthetic entry point. What I present, represent, and welcome my audience into across my manuscripts is a complex series of engagements, but I argue that at its heart my dissertation is not particularly abstract or

abstracted/able in practice. Figure 17, then, is a kind of onto-epistemological aid towards relating to my own way of thinking/knowing/being as someone who daily feels othered/displaced in thought and feeling in the place I write from.

Figure 17

The Interconnections of the Three Texts that Comprise My Thesis-by-Article



My doctoral research is then necessarily a multi-layered methodological project as well as an arts-based knowledge dissemination prototyping project. As a thesis-by-article, my dissertation contains three main texts: Chapter 2 is a literature review published as *The transeunt*

listener: Towards futurities of re-learning in truth and reconciliation curriculum and teacher education; Chapter 3 is a methodological frameworks treatise titled *Relational lacunae and (re)turning*: *towards an inspirited relational research methodology for curriculum studies and kindred futurities,* submitted as a chapter to an upcoming volume on provoking curricular dialogues in divisive times; and Chapter 4 is a manuscript that reports on the methods and findings of the project titled *Relearning data in education: An arts-based inspiriting of Truth and Reconciliation Teacher Education*, submitted for consideration as a book chapter in Darlene St. George and Stephanie Bartlet's forthcoming collection *Creation Centred Living Literarcies: Turning Points and Truth Telling*.

I position Chapter 2 as a relationally ethical literature review. I asked: What does it mean to read, write, and act towards reconciliation in curriculum and teacher education? To answer this question, I developed and performed a situated literature review of truth and reconciliation teacher education research as a field, or curriculum, of pedagogical texts. To do so, I borrowed from Lisa Farley's (2010) concept of the reluctant pilgrim. While Farley reflects on a physical journey to understand how belief can withstand historical loss and immersion in ongoing systems of colonial power, I engaged with her concept in attendance of not only my selection of authors' words and implied hopes, but my own beliefs and hopes as I read them, to become what I term a *transeunt listener*, open to and experiencing subjective and intersubjective transformation through reading, as an opportunity to psychically and physically move through and listen for the complexly relational hopes of those other than myself. In my review, I wove in my own reading-as-encounter as a transeunt listener, to understand how teacher education might hope to affect change in and outside the minds of educators, including myself. I discuss what I see as three tensions in truth and reconciliation teacher education discourse: belonging; disruption of settler consciousness; and hope for an expanded ethical capacity in teachers and curriculum theorists. I conclude by offering how my ongoing transeunt listening to truth and reconciliation discourse and practice calls me towards new futurities of re-learning in teacher education, beginning with a methodological call for a robust and multivalent discourse on spirit, presently only implied in the literature, as integral to any form of reconciliatory curriculum or education.

I follow my central methodological call in Chapter 2 in Chapter 3, theorizing towards the possibility of a robust and multivalent discourse of spirit. I situate the onto-epistemological concept of relationality within modernist Eurocentric knowledge systems, beyond into

Indigenous scholarship and practices, and particularly within curriculum studies and myself as a relational being concerned with the limitations of teacher education research and westernized education's wider address of the most existential concerns of our time. I demonstrate that relationality is a distinct yet commensurate formation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews that, when viewed as commensurate, challenges theorists to reimagine what they mean by the word 'relationality.' My central provocation in Chapter 3 is thus confronting not only our individualized limitations of such understandings but also our agency and responsibility to accommodate such limitations between ourselves and students. I offer that the necessary onto-epistemological solvent and resolvent needed to truly re-learn relationality, particularly re-unifying ethical and kinship relationality, is curricular realizations and representations of the existence of spirit as entities in and part of all relationships. I include an account of how such an offering also attends to the relational risk of opening spirit into a space and place of shared meaning-making, including the limitations of 'risk' as colonial and maintaining of colonial thinking and being. I thus end with considerations of how arts-based inspiriting of a necessarily inspirited relational methodology might look like, and its implications for education research methods, pedagogy, and dissemination as the foundation for truly inspirited and relationally ethical pedagogies of truth and redress.

Continuing from the confluence between methodology and method found at the conclusion of Chapter 3, I share in Chapter 4 my preliminary materializations of the data of my doctoral project along with the re/presentational and practical implications of researching and teaching against a relationally impoverished relationality. Pragmatically this consideration takes the form of a richly visualized, arts-based report on the methods and findings of my dissertation research. I report on my preliminary process work of materializing relational registers of data such as spirit with Jordyn Hendricks, a Two-Spirit and Red River Métis artist (with ties to the St. Laurent and The Pas regions of what is now Manitoba) within OCAD University's Indigenous Visual Culture Program and my initial re/presentations of my research participant data. I report on this inspiriting as a conceptual-material collaboration towards the future, planned (post-PhD) materialization of an alternative dissemination platform for relational research. I share how (so far) collaborating with my participants, honouring the relational spirit(s) of their data, and then engaging in arts-based theorizing and materializing with Jordyn, accompanied by iterative

validation with my participants allowed for an expanded, inspirited relational research praxis for education and beyond.

In Figure 17, then, I emphasize that the heart of my work is spirit, recognized as animate and deserving of care and respect in research, teaching, and academic production/representation. Inspired by informal conversations with one of my research participants, Jennifer Markides (personal communication, 08 April 2025), I intentionally situate my work on a kind of floating or drifting island to suggest that 'place' is always in my heart but that what 'place' is or could be is not and cannot be essentialized. I anticipate that some readers may yet question my understanding of place as integral to relationality as I hope to follow it into the future. However, even if it might be suggested that I cannot understand 'place' in the same way as some other bio-spirit-socially constructed individuals, I do have intimate relationships with place and, importantly, with place as spirit. Place is a lifelong practice of noticing, (re)building relationships and responsibilities. Given that all of us and our relations are in constant motion, it is not sustainable, humane, or existentially healthy for shared futurities if we hierarchize senses of place or essentialize who can find authentic relationship with it. The physical 'place' I write from has moved across the globe in eonic time — like a sea turtle, Turtle Island is in constant motion. The bio-social-spirit sphere we all inhabit, Mother Earth, is moving through space at speeds difficult to comprehend, following its star and fellow solar family units across space and time.

And so, I am the island in Figure 17 — while no person *need be* an island, some of us now are by virtue of the relationships (or lack thereof) that do or do not hold us together. I have no idea where I will end up post-PhD; I will very likely have to leave this place that I have grown to love. We are still in the world and part of creation, however, and can still feel 'place' where there is no (to me) 'native land' — including virtual spaces and places, or, in my case, the stories of academia as places. Spirit — mine, yours, and the many more that are quite really alive, sentient and worthy of care in their own right — is part of me. This thesis must be, like my body, necessarily bounded (i.e., the red square frame). However, if we are all related, my sense of spirit, if I choose to share it across my work, may yet reach beyond myself and may one day be perceptible to your own, if recognized as the seeds of a new relationship and shared future.

Chapter 2

The Transeunt Listener:
Towards Futurities of Re-learning in Truth and Reconciliation Curriculum and Teacher Education

Patrick Phillips
University of Ottawa

Abstract:
What does it mean to read, write and act towards reconciliation in curriculum and teacher education? To answer this question, I perform a situated literature review of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education research. I borrow from Lisa Farley's (2010) concept of the reluctant pilgrim. While Farley reflects on a physical journey to understand how belief can withstand historical loss and immersion in ongoing systems of colonial power, I engage with her concept psychically; I attend to the words and listen for the implied hopes of the authors I read. Also attentive to my own beliefs and hopes as I read them, I become what I term a *transeunt listener*. I discuss how I became a transeunt listener through a form of reading-as-encounter and how it enabled me to understand how teacher education might address what I see as three tensions in truth and reconciliation teacher education discourse: 1) belonging; 2) disruption of settler consciousness; and 3) an expanded ethical capacity in teachers and curriculum theorists.

Keywords: re-learning; Truth and Reconciliation; transeunt listener; curriculum studies; teacher education

L'auditeur transeunt : Vers des futurités du réapprentissage dans les programmes de vérité et réconciliation et la formation des enseignants

Résumé :
Que signifie lire, écrire et agir pour la réconciliation dans les programmes d'études et la formation des enseignants ? Pour répondre à cette question, je réalise une revue de la littérature portant sur la recherche concernant la formation des enseignants liée à la vérité et réconciliation. Je m'appuie sur le concept du *pèlerin réticent* développé par Lisa Farley (2010). Alors que Farley réfléchit à un voyage physique pour comprendre comment la croyance peut résister à la perte historique et à l'immersion dans les systèmes coloniaux toujours en place, j'engage son concept sur un plan psychique; je suis attentif aux mots et j'écoute les espoirs implicites des auteurs que je lis. En demeurant également attentif à mes propres croyances et espérances lors de ma lecture, je deviens ce que j'appelle un *auditeur transeunt*. Je discute comment je suis devenu un auditeur transeunt grâce à une forme de *lecture comme rencontre*, et de la façon dont cela m'a permis de mieux comprendre comment la formation des enseignants pourrait aborder ce que j'identifie comme trois tensions dans les discours sur la vérité et réconciliation en éducation : 1) l'appartenance; 2) la perturbation de la conscience coloniale; et 3) l'élargissement de la capacité éthique chez les enseignants et les théoriciens du curriculum.

Mots clés : réapprentissage; vérité et réconciliation; auditeur transeunt; études curriculaires; formation des enseignants

The Transeunt Listener

> "What does reconciliation mean, Uncle Huckleberry?" Memengwe asked.
> "It means learning from the past so we don't repeat the same mistakes and making the world a better place for all humans and animals." (Blackstock, 2020, pp. 32-33)

> [There is] something of a fraught encounter with the dissonance that echoes at the heart of historical identification and perspectives. (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, p. 610)

What does it mean to read, write and act in ways that encourage reconciliation in curriculum and teacher education? To answer this question, I performed a situated reading of pedagogical research texts in the field of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education. As a complexly intersectional, yet White, settler Canadian who is in the process of learning what Truth and Reconciliation means while also performing a task of institutional mastery in the form of a literature review from a fortified position atop the lands originally cared for by the Algonquin Peoples and who continue to care for the same, my response was not only situated within the bounds of my bibliography and within myself, but also by my experiences with Truth and Reconciliation discourse and teaching. Foundational to this article is Madden's (2019) call for both organizations and individuals to theorize "reconciliation in terms of assumptions, purposes, goals and discourses in order to more transparently position themselves in relation to and contribute within this emerging field" (p. 304).

I began by borrowing from Lisa Farley's (2010) concept of the reluctant pilgrim, a subject position from which historical consciousness and the possibilities and limitations of belief are not discussed or experienced separately. In taking up this concept, I include both the "material landscapes [or what is experienced] and the immaterial, imperial wishfulness [of] transcultural reparation" in my literature/discourse review (Farley, 2010, pp. 8-10). Similar to Farley (2010), I understand this transcultural reparation to be embodied in the texts, not only by the authors I read, but by me as I read the words of the discourse "despite what can be indicated in more certain terms" (p. x). While Farley (2010) reflects on a physical journey to understand how belief can withstand historical loss and immersion in ongoing systems of colonial power, I reflect on my academic journey as a *transeunt listener*, a term I define in the endnote but its relevance I explain fully in the next section.[1] For now, suffice it to say that I read my topic discourses "symptomatically", as a means of understanding how teacher education and its discourse might hope to affect change in and outside the minds of educators, including myself (Farley, 2010, p. 27). As a transeunt listener, I identify and discuss what I see as three key tensions in Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse. The first is belonging, or the tension between the inclusion or "success" of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and their teachers within wider settler society and the hope for self-determination beyond such frames. The second is a disruptive expansion of settler consciousness

[1] Because this note is lengthy, it has been placed as an endnote, located after the references. All other notes are placed as footnotes (at the bottom of the pages).

that includes Indigenous perspectives. The third is the hope that teacher candidates and curriculum theorists broaden their ethical capacity to more fully read, write and act in the contexts of a profoundly implicating sense-making of their relationships with fellow human beings and the more-than-human world. I conclude by discussing how a transeunt listening to Truth and Reconciliation discourse calls me towards new futurities[2] of re-learning in curriculum and teacher education.

Literature Review as Pilgrimage and Transeunce

> The ethical invites a focus on transient moments of encounter with others in which subjectivity is performed or achieved. (Phelan, 2019, p. 5)

When I first encountered Lisa Farley's (2010) *reluctant pilgrim,* I was moved—or rather, I felt myself move. In turn, what it means to be "moved" by reading a text changed for me. It became more than a private affective experience. I do not mean to suggest that I felt no emotion; indeed, my reading of the subject of Farley's (2010) pilgrimage, the collective memory of survival and enduring belief embodied in the story of Lejac Residential School resident Rose of the Carrier Nation was a very emotional one. More than that, it was a compelling historical-subjective nexus. For me, reading became a movement between places of subjective formation that compelled me to attend and follow. Reading became more akin to listening—it called for my embodied presence in the text. The act of listening suggests 'being there' in the place (or text) for the speaker and giving my full attention to what is being asked of me in response. Ethical encounters with discursive texts in this listening allow the possibility of texts to change us and our beliefs, acknowledge the hopes of others as if they were our own and even prompt us into affinitive action.

As I write while imagining my reader, I realize that concepts like 'pilgrim' and/or 'pilgrimage' may seem disconnected from or even at odds with the ostensible decolonial goals of Truth and Reconciliation. While I acknowledge this tension between concepts and goals, I suggest it also has generative value, not least for me. Farley's (2010) pre-colonial understanding of pilgrimage on Turtle Island is more akin to "a journey to one or more ritual landscapes to leave offerings for and interact with spiritual essences residing there in order to fulfill obligations relating to the maintenance of

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[2] I ask my reader to consider that the word "futurities" is intentional and distinct from "futures". As cultural studies scholar Rebecca Wanzo (2020) relates, "'Futurity" connotes not just what will happen or a time that is not yet. It is laden with affective attachments such as hope and fear. But it is best understood in relationship to the other words that are often proximate to it, such as "time", "horizon", "utopia", and "dystopia". Throughout North America, futurity is consistently associated with identity, linking ideas of what the future will look like with the belief that various groups can build a new space or, in our worst imaginings, be injured by an impending world that disavows or has no place for them. Futurities are simultaneous and sometimes competing with the idea of the future always contained within another project related to nation or identity. Theorists of futurity in American studies and cultural studies have thus focused on this nexus of identity and imagined world building" (p. 119). As Wanzo further relates, before he coined the term "manifest destiny", American ambassador John L. O'Sullivan declared (1839, p. 427) that the United States was destined to be "the great nation of futurity", suggesting that European colonists never sought to "de-populate the land" by "wicked ambition". The violent takeover of Turtle Island belies such mythologies. I presently suggest that we, as human beings, can yet craft better futurities together.

world balance and social identity" (Palka, 2014, p. 10). As such, pilgrimage might be understood as a curriculum for spiritual sustenance, renewal and transformation. This does not mean evading the more common and Eurocentric sense of the word or ignoring the power and privilege a religious or otherwise spiritual pilgrimage might enact. Pilgrimages or journeys for Palka (2014) and Farley (2010), whether physical or psychical, allow one the opportunity to step away from everyday social obligations, "conventional norms and hierarchies", to self-reflect or connect with different others one might not normally encounter and so critique, at least inwardly, institutionalized, taken-for-granted hopes and futures (Coleman, 2015, p. 146).

While elsewhere, Catholic priest Fr. Frank Fahey (2002) suggests that the "pilgrim is always in danger of becoming a tourist" or a voyeur, he also acknowledges that an attentive tourist "is constantly running the risk of becoming a pilgrim" (p. 218). Pilgrimage, then, can offer a transformative journey of being changed as a human being. Notwithstanding the Judaeo-Christian assumptions underlying educational histories and futurities in what some of us call Canada, including the legacy of residential schools alongside the constraints of teacher education programs and their still mostly-White or otherwise non-Indigenous settler demographics, I posit that reading as a pilgrim on a pilgrimage offers an entry point for teachers and teacher educators to encounter crucial topics relationally (Childs et al., 2010; Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Janzen & Cranston, 2016).

In the context of Truth and Reconciliation education, for or by teachers, reading in this way is now, for me, such a pedagogy. Harried into conforming to the curriculum of teacher education and, subsequently, classroom practice, I find that teacher students see themselves as includers of knowledge rather than agents in its construction. In part, because they are assessed only on what they are compelled to know, their focus is on what they should include in their lesson plans to cover topics like Truth and Reconciliation adequately, while many of their teachers are often (myself included) concerned with the same. However, expanding their view with concepts of agential construction forge the notions of relationality I want to engage in with them and with you, as readers, here.

As a complexly intersectional, yet White settler curriculum scholar, I enjoy the privilege of questioning my institution's teacher education curriculum and my own curriculum. I also feel the same pressures as teacher students in that my curriculum is very much about learning to cite (or include) the right sources and demonstrate a mastery of educational knowledge.[3] Like teacher students, I too am compelled to operate within the confines of academia and what Papaschase Cree

[3] Here and throughout this essay, I use the phrase "teacher student" to encompass any student, undergraduate or graduate, who I teach or mentor across the courses I teach and the research projects I administer or otherwise facilitate. Many if not most graduate students (MA, MEd, PhD) at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education are also practicing educators. Many of these students, in my experience, are still in the midst of understanding the implications of Truth and Reconciliation education—or have not even begun to when I first meet them, in the case of many international students who wish to stay, live, and eventually teach in some capacity in service to the state of Canada.

scholar Dwayne Donald (2011) calls the walls of colonial frontier logics. As such, what I have mostly read, researched, taught and written about so far are all textual commodities and the trappings of an academic life which assumes the ideal research output is a textual commodity.

Academic reading is more than a textual commodity for me when I engage with it as a listener. For example, during the global pandemic, I found that reading as an act of listening became the primary site for my encounters with others and their ideas. It became a collection of places where I encountered the hopes and futures of those other than myself. Reading-as-listening was a conscious choice between being moved or simply reading and extracting. It prompted me to intertwine ethics with understanding towards partnership with others to know differently.

In terms of positionality, reading and theorizing curriculum studies texts in this listening way has become for me, a kind of *binate*—but not binary—movement. It is at once a movement toward encountering places and people outside my own lived experience and a movement that simultaneously passes through my own personal experiences of queerness, disability, neurodivergence, intergenerational trauma, survival of abuse and assault, displacement and abandonment, homelessness, an ethics of care and, especially, my relationships with the more-than-human world. Further to my positionality, my reading and writing within this essay are the seeds and soil of a larger in-process project that envisions the possibility of re/presenting educational discourse and its authors in ways that do not foreclose relational implications. So, my hope for this essay is that it be read as a work of and invitation into a pedagogical relationality with me, one that not only traverses physical presence, but creates a close psychical proximity between us through the material arrangement of the text and through our joint hopes and fears as they intersect with Truth and Reconciliation discourse.

Farley (2010) suggests that locating "curriculum 'in place' returns knowledge to the particular context of its construction and that endows [it with] significance" (p. 8). She even cautions us about the "risks of tearing bodies from knowledge, feet from ground, and curriculum from community" (p. 8). I wondered then, as I read Farley (2010), if physical "place" was significantly different from psychical "place" especially because my interlocuting subjectivities were largely formed in my psychical encounters with texts. Farley (2010) helped me answer my own question. She reminded me that to encounter place is to implicate one's own body; it means considering "not only how the particularities of a place shape us, but also how we, in turn, affect the routes we travel'' as historical subjects (p. 9). I determined that physical place and psychical place operated very similarly, if experienced as relational and ethical.

That said, from a curriculum studies perspective, "place" is perhaps located somewhere in-between the physical and the psychical in terms of con-texts and the affects of texts, but not necessarily so in terms of how texts effect change in us or our movements as human beings (Phillips, 2021). This effective—and affective—change is the rare and enduring lesson I learned from reading Farley's pilgrimage. I changed because of being able to follow her movements through psychical places as she traversed real places, towards palpable changes in her understandings of things, even when such understandings were conflicted by doubt, guilt, hope, belief, or abject gaps in her

experience or comprehension. In this essay, I traverse the topography of Truth and Reconciliation in the so-called settler state of Canada, in which the meaning of Truth or Reconciliation is contested and often cannot be conflated (Stein, 2020).

Given my experience with Farley's (2010) text, a superficial pedagogical encounter some, and perhaps many, students of education have with texts, be they teacher candidates or graduate students or tenured professors could arguably be a focus for concern. To examine what I mean by "encounters", I draw on the work of Kent den Heyer (2009, 2012) and his co-authored work with Abbott in 2011 about curriculum-as-encounter. den Heyer (2009) makes a

> distinction between curriculum-as-thing (body of facts, skills, and attitudes to deliver to the student body) and curriculum-as-encounter (the ways in which our shared sense-making is itself a historical legacy that requires explicit study) [that] reflects two differing interpretations of curriculum in curriculum studies and teacher education literature. As thing, curriculum questions concern how best to convey the content that students should acquire, what techniques assist in this acquisition, and what assessments best measure acquisition. . . . In curriculum-as-encounter, inquiry focuses on the interplay between [the] discursive contexts that shape pedagogical intentions. (pp. 344-345)

Literature review as a curriculum-as-encounters also reminds me of Aoki's (2004) distinction between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived, or for my purposes, reading-as-lived. In a literature review, one must already be open to being changed by what one encounters, at least on a discursive level. (The synthesis of a literature review is, ideally, a new subjectivity in relation to a matter at hand.) As a curriculum, however, how might a literature review engender change in the human being? Scholars like den Heyer (2009), Britzman (2003) and Carson (2007) suggest that curriculum-as-encounter attends to the real complexity of difficult topics both in and outside the classroom lives of teachers. This includes the possibility of having unsettling encounters with "knowledge already possessed", when we learn that this knowledge might be incomplete or when we feel the need to rethink "deeply held intellectual beliefs and emotional investments" (den Heyer, 2009, p. 346). These investments might include collective commitments to settler futurities and the (colonial) stories that we inhabit daily in their maintenance (Tupper, 2020). Another similar investment might be our "encounter [with] the 'grand narratives' shaping mainstream interpretations about agency", as we find them in "the daily news to the refined air of scholarship" (den Heyer, 2018, p. 230). den Heyer (2018) is particularly concerned with the agential subjectivity in teachers as an outcome of history education curriculum. As it relates to the subject of this paper, I see that the outcomes den Heyer (2018) seeks and terms "agential subjectivity" are not so different from the outcomes I seek through reading Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse. For den Heyer (2018) "the question of agency and the traffic between material and symbolic structure on the one hand and people's perceived choices and available actions on the other" are similar to how I listen as I read and engage with text as if I were 'there,' so that it moves me to action in the here and now—making me a transeunt listener (p. 241).

I hope to demonstrate how reading as listening and as curriculum might find "moments, and their associated tensions, when subjectivity is achieved in all its singularity—when teacher candidates persist in questioning the given, steal time for solitary study or act upon well-defined commitments" (Phelan, 2019, p. 4). As Phelan (2019) contends at the intersection of curriculum theorizing and teacher education, "to be educational, teacher education must be primarily concerned with the teacher's subjectivity, that is, with the teacher's freedom of expression, thought, and action" (p. 4). While Phelan (2019) does not address the question of *whether* teacher education can or should work to produce teacher subjectivity, I propose that it must because these subjectivities and their agency are necessary for action and transformation, and because, as a minimum, it is better than a passive academic interpretation. What I invoke instead is what D. G. Smith (1999) names the *hermeneutic imagination*, which he claims has the capacity to throw "open the challenge to inquire into what we mean when we use words like curriculum, research and pedagogy . . . [and ask] what makes it possible for us to speak, think and act in the ways we do" (p. 28). For Smith, this is a generative act that allows us to envision and hope for change "[amidst the] constraints and difficulties that constantly threaten to foreclose on the future" (p. 29). A capacity to imagine what a text's author senses and hopes for as we read them adds, for me, a necessary part of being a transeunt listener when we read.

Similar to Laura Jewett's (2011) hermeneut, I am a navigator. I engage reading as transience between what Jewett (2011) calls "spheres of temporary coherence" and becoming in which ritualized academic practices such as reading might be expanded into an ethical space or place in which we are affected as human beings (p. 93). Reading into writing becomes what Brian Casemore (2008) offers as a topos for "being-in-place [as] being-in-language, [where] a writerly act [is] entangled in the skeins of history and our inner lives" (p. 111). Thus, I view the discursive encounters I have on my reading pilgrimages as hermeneutical—a pre- and post-religious, spiritual, ethical empathy. My pilgrimages reconfigure Jewett's (2011) reading-as-transience and Casemore's (2008) writerly entanglements into an active readerly *transeunce*. When defined as a mental act or series of mental movements having effects outside the mind, transeunce is a good word to describe the kind of transformative, active and practical manifestations I experience when reading. Theologian Russell's (1979) conception of transeunce is also akin to mine. She defines it as "the human ability to go beyond ourselves toward others in order to realize our own being . . . [and] as historical [ability]: always in the process of going beyond the present, and beyond [ourselves] toward the future" (p. 48). And so, transeunce might offer us a way to frame living, re/learning, writing, reading and teaching within and across the ethically-dependent and interconnected praxial tributaries that flow into and out of curriculum studies, teacher education and particularly Truth and Reconciliation education. Thus, re-learning and teaching how to do so in a good way is essential for the well-being of all our relations, human or otherwise. It is essential as we collectively move into and constitute un/foreseeable futures that might include relations with unprecedented displacement, placelessness and unpredictable powers, like AI. With this in mind, I offer here that we share, as human beings, an ability for transeunce. And so more to the point, I suggest that such an ability for transeunce is a

stance of ethical and kinship relationality that spans non-Indigenous and Indigenous worldviews.[4]

To summarize, such movement and ethical, future-oriented transeunce defines my approach to reading Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse and to understanding the three tensions I found within it related to belonging, disruption of settler consciousness and hopes for an expanded ethical capacity in teachers and curriculum theorists.

Belonging: Integration or Self-Determination?

> By design, this process inherently has us responding to the Euro-Western construction of Indigenous policy. Clearly this approach does not work. (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 29)

In tracing the status of Indigenous education from the Indian Act through to the early days of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Michelle Pidgeon, of Mi'kmaq ancestry from Newfoundland and Labrador and her colleagues, including Jo-ann Archibald of the Sto:lo First Nation (2013), place careful focus on working and speaking against Canadian government assimilationist policies as the impetus behind education for Indigenous students.[5] Reflecting on 40 years of Canadian federal control of Indigenous education, Pidgeon et. al. (2013) identified core principles for protecting future Indigenous students' rights and for anticipating the challenges these students' rights might face in the future, starting with the *Indian Control of Indian Education* (ICIE) (1972) policy document. For the ICIE's (1972) authors, Indigenous students have "rights to good quality education that truly honours Indigenous ways of knowing and being" (1972, p. 5). This document, designed with the support of the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), remains just as relevant today as it was in 1972. Inequitable funding for education between non-Indigenous and Indigenous schools and communities, alienation of communities from schooling and widely ingrained systemic discrimination and violence towards Canada's Indigenous Peoples continue across all state apparatuses, ostensible social nets and the so-called Canadian multicultural mosaic. Meanwhile, Indigenous families still face systemic violence at the hands of Canada's child welfare system (Blackstock, 2009). And perhaps even meaner—more cruel towards our shared future generations of relatives—the original covenants and Treaties between first and newcomer to Turtle Island largely remain forgotten or even actively dishonoured. These truths are inseparable from issues of teacher education, even if teacher education has been continually implicated as a nexus from which a future of redress might originate. In other words, teacher education must constantly

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[4] As Elder Duke Redbird of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation ([1960] 2019; personal communication, November 13, 2024) has taught me, today no other peoples are as transient or nomadic as White citizens, in the sense that as a White-embodied human being one can be as nomadic as some pre-contact Indigenous Peoples.

[5] Here and throughout this writing, I intentionally use the capitalized terms Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples as an expression of respectful solidarity across the diversity of First Nation, Métis, Inuit, status and non-status Peoples within the colonial boundaries of what some of us call Canada. This is in line with international discussions, including the terminology of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Where possible, I attribute specific community relationships. I leave terminology used in quotations intact (Younging, 2018).

question how transformative or reconciliatory teaching might be, while historical promises remain broken, and injustices persist against Indigenous Peoples and our shared more-than-human kin beyond the classroom.

Layered into educational self-determination, which would respect Indigenous life-worlds, is a tension between pushing against assimilation (as the precondition of belonging) and finding belonging (through equity in or alongside wider settler society). In 2010, Kanien'kehá:ka scholar Frank Deer assessed the congruence between the behaviours and attitudes of Indigenous students, those of their teachers and the prescribed outcomes of Canadian citizenship education in Manitoba schools. Deer (2010) frames the consequences of past "problems with colonizers" as "a struggle for identity as well as a quest for self-determination" and "belonging" for Canada's Indigenous students (p. 2). Wary of assimilative success, Deer (2010) makes the distinction that Canadian schooling "may be regarded as a neo-colonial enterprise when employed with Aboriginal students" (p. 3). However, belonging for Deer (2013) appears to be a matter of being inside or outside the frame of Canadian citizenship and economic participation. Deer (2013) recommends "integration of relevant Aboriginal perspectives in curricula and school activities" and better recognition by teachers of "Aboriginal students' personal circumstances" (pp. 23-24). However, Deer (2010) earlier aligned his recommendations with the goals of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth's 2004 Aboriginal Education Action Plan. This plan "identified graduation, access to and completion of post-secondary education, career preparation, and relevant research as its principal objectives" (Deer, 2010, p. 4).

Listening more deeply, Deer's (2010, 2013) concern with belonging registers self-determination alongside the pragmatic hope that Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations might be yet sustainable, with their respective ways of knowing and being brought into dialogue through supporting Indigenous presence in teacher education. Cree Métis scholar Michelle Hogue (2012) reminds me that the lived reality of schooling means that these hopes are always-already co-implicated in education. While Hogue (2012) is "continually bothered by the lack of Aboriginal representation and success in post-secondary" education, she is equally concerned that Indigenous students "must leave their culture at the door and adopt Western approaches to education and curriculum to succeed" (pp. 77-78). Read as a systemic concern, belonging is not just a tension created by the question of who gets to belong, but who gets to belong and how. When settler communities understand that assimilation in any form is not an option, the more serious question becomes: How can settler schools create environments in which Indigenous students can thrive and learn on their own terms? Hogue (2012) suggests that without the wider systemic opportunity to belong in Western systems, educational institutions will continue to lack the capacity to truly honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

I framed the header for this subsection intentionally as a question because in my experience, teacher students often understand belonging as a choice between integration into a single Canadian curriculum or as an experience separate from such a curriculum (and so beyond their requirements to understand or, more generously, their everyday praxis). In my experience teaching, teacher students face difficulties unpacking what voices like Pidgeon et al. (2013), Deer (2010, 2013) and

Hogue (2012) mean by belonging. The dominant frames of equity, diversity and inclusion in teacher education seem to cast belonging as either a matter of assessed success or as a passive, multicultural curricular additive. In their study following the effects of British Columbia's (BC) Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, White et al. (2012) found that teaching for belonging had shown some positive impacts for Indigenous students in BC public schools in terms of belonging and success understood outside of Eurocentric norms. However, these impacts were highly localized and attributed to the actions of individual teachers and the "pockets of knowledge" they carried. In other words, these were teachers who did more than their contractual obligations warranted towards relating to Indigenous students, communities, histories and knowledges. In my own teaching, I have felt such a "pocket", not just of knowledge but of ethics too. I try to guide students beyond standard curriculum and institutional ethics to read/listen to Indigenous voices to better understand Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous issues and convey these in their classroom teaching. However, while White et. al. (2012) made conscious attempts to move away from Eurocentric concepts of success even when working within these same Eurocentric-global capitalist frameworks, I find that the teacher students I teach still cling to status quo assumptions about what a classroom should produce—successfully tested, standardized and retained students—to frame their understandings. Cannon (2013) considers how non-Indigenous teachers are themselves oppressed within settler colonial systems but says that the "tangible outcome" of having a dialogue about what educational success looks like in different cultures is still located within an individual rights framework (p. 29). In other words, the teaching of colonial history and Indigenous-settler relations in teacher education continues to be largely framed within a Western social justice paradigm and as such assumes no fundamental changes are needed to the operationalization of teaching in settler public education or settler society at large (Kovach, 2013).

Cree writer and scholar Tracy Lindberg (2015) notes that institutions' dependence on a kind of "bums in seats" logic when making space for Indigenous ideas and bodies is at best superficial and at worst inhospitable (p. 77). Student teachers in my classrooms sometimes reflect a similar logic when responding to writings like those of Deer (2010) and Hogue (2012) and to their calls for redress in terms of improving the academic success of Indigenous students through retention and integration into Canada's future economy. This call for improvement as well the logic used to address it is "not a new proposal. It arose in the 1950s as an assimilative federal policy aimed at moving Indigenous students from residential schools and into provincial schools" (Wiseman, 2018, p. 335). Amidst commitments to mandate integration of Indigenous perspectives across teacher education and K-12 curricula, Wiseman (2018) posits that more is needed to realize a "(r)evolution" in Canadian teacher education. Wiseman (2018) suggests that "belonging" for Indigenous bodies and their ways of knowing and being is difficult to articulate in a non-Indigenous institutional register. Wiseman (2018) suggests that while space and inclusion in classrooms for Indigenous Peoples and ways of knowing and being can be mandated (revolution), meaningful change will only happen in classrooms when individual educators are committed to the efforts they need to make in working towards this goal (evolution).

Kanien'kehá:ka scholar Sandra Styres and colleagues suggest that educational change must begin with an examination of worldviews in teacher education and research (see Styres et al., 2010). Without it "Indigenous communities, funding agencies, universities and researchers [who] all recognize the need and the possibilities for effective, positive and collaborative research" will continue to be wary "of the landmines that still remain buried within a landscape of disparate epistemologies, mistrust and isomorphic discourse" (Styres et al., 2010, p. 619). Set within what Donald (2011, 2019), calls the enduring colonial logics of institutions and their greatly forgetful curricula, I suggest that teacher education educators and scholars must seriously ask themselves: What happens when a non-Indigenous teacher, raised and integrated in Western neoliberal society, is mandated to include the histories and present perspectives of Indigenous Peoples? Similarly, Lindberg (2015) asks how can Indigenous knowledges and perspectives find a home in teacher education and teachers?

Answers to these questions form the crux of educational belonging for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies. However, real answers need to address the actual problem, which is that teacher education programs still espouse and re-enfold teacher students into a White-and-neoliberal ethos yet purport to believe in Truth and Reconciliation. In my own experience teaching teachers, I find myself, a White settler and my mostly-White or racialized non-Indigenous students still working to understand the full weight of these questions. As I read and re-read each semester, I grow increasingly more determined to find some kind of—or kindred—answer that I can embody. As a transeunt listener, I believe I have found a partial answer to these questions. Even a complexly intersectional White settler like me can listen in person or as they read and allow themselves to be moved and changed by what they hear the other saying.

Even so, the onto-epistemological implications of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education literature always push against the walls of the classroom and bleed across weekly topics. I find myself and my students caught between understanding Truth and Reconciliation as teachable content contained within prevailing curricula and a burgeoning impulse to challenge what we teach and how we teach it. I have for some time begun to openly question the physical and psychical boundaries of what we consider education to be and ask what it could be in this place, and I offer the same lingering uncertainty as a lesson to the students I teach. I ask them, what non-Indigenous scholar Jennifer MacDonald and Métis scholar Jennifer Markides (2019) ask of themselves, that is, to "recognize the complexity of this work and [acknowledge] that certain assumptions of voice, power, truth and representation are embedded in our practice" (p. 96). I further ask them to find ways of "sharing perspectives—influenced by our own values, assumptions, concerns, and aspirations—[to] reveal new possibilities of living well together" in a hope that they will (MacDonald & Markides, 2019, p. 96). Although these requests are often met with a roaring silence, I am hopeful that, for some at least, these silences mean they are taking the time to reimagine what it means for themselves and others to belong.

Settler Consciousness: Epistemologies of Ignorance, Unsettling the Settler and the Limitations of Settler Futurity

> While existing colonial relations may create the appearance of "peace" in Canada, this appearance is misleading and needs to be interrupted. (Tupper, 2014, p. 472)

In his September 2010 update to the Senate on the TRC's progress, Murray Sinclair, Anishinaabe of the Peguis First Nation and Chair of the TRC, insisted the: "residential schools have had such a dramatic impact upon Aboriginal people in Canada that sometimes people believe it is an Aboriginal problem. It is not an Aboriginal problem. It is a problem that all people in Canada need to think about and address" (Government of Canada, 2010, pp. 7-8). As Wiseman (2018) notes, the TRC is "a key historical instance of documenting and acknowledging the violence and atrocities perpetuated on Indigenous young people and their families via the Canadian state" (p. 224). As such, it is also a key instance through which Canada's colonial history is recast not only as a problem for Indigenous education but for non-Indigenous education as well. Although it is certainly not the first time Indigenous voices have asserted this reality in teacher education discourse, the TRC has arguably prompted a "shift" in academic thinking towards the need for non-Indigenous teachers to adopt a stance that is consistent with a meaningful and respectful address of Indigenous history and perspectives in schooling as a necessary condition for reconciliation. However, Aitken and Radford (2018) note that as part of a larger global trend, teacher "resistance, ambivalence and negativity around teaching for reconciliation have emerged as important objects of research" (p. 41). Bissell and Korteweg (2016) understand this resistance, ambivalence and negativity as a psycho-social complex that they term the *settler-teacher horizon*. Reading through similar discourse, I see the need for practices of "unsettling" in teacher education on this horizon. Regan (2010) ostensibly calls for teachers to interact "differently with Indigenous [P]eople[s]", that is, to act "with vulnerability, humility, and a willingness to stay in the decolonizing struggle of our own discomfort" (p. 13).

As Tupper (2014, 2020) and den Heyer and Abbott (2011) attest, the "power of conscious and unconscious history, memory, and national narratives [constitute] the way individuals develop identities as citizens of a country" (Tupper, 2014, p. 476). While "all disciplines are entered into as stories already in progress that provide a sense of history and identity for their members", as teachers of teacher students we must ask teacher students "to attend to ways institutional storytelling shapes their historical understandings and, by extension, the values they are prepared to convey to their future students" (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, pp. 611-620). den Heyer and Abbott (2011) found that teaching teachers to address multiple historical perspectives, including Canada's history of residential schools, means working against what Seixas (2000) describes as an entrenched, single story of Canada and what Stanley (1998) describes as the grand narrative of those who populate these prevailing stories. Even with these historical thinking concepts in their curriculum, den Heyer and Abbott (2011) found that their students nevertheless could not avoid trying to reintegrate their understanding of history so that it was congruent with Canada's nationalistic imaginary. Tupper (2020) defines this imaginary as constituted through the "settler colonial consciousness", which "normalizes and celebrates the settler experience, rendering the past and present experiences of

Indigenous [P]eoples either invisible or as distinctly separate from what is worth knowing" and ultimately "inhibits opportunities for ethical relationships and reconciliation with Indigenous [P]eoples in the future" (p. 89). Unsettling settler colonial consciousness in teacher education is a crucial, and for some, a difficult proposition, because it means letting go of deeply and collectively held investments in shared and individual settler futurities (Seixas, 2004).

"In schools", Tupper (2014) says, these "colonial dispositions are typically perpetuated through 'colonial-blind' discourses that deny the continuing harm embedded in settlers' historical and contemporary relationships" with Indigenous Peoples, and "include narratives of the nation that do not account for [their] foundational importance" (p. 470). In contrast, Tupper (2014) says that Treaty education is an intervention that can unsettle settler colonial consciousness in meaningful ways. Treaty education is at its core a peacebuilding education. It not only centers Indigenous Peoples as foundation peoples of Canada, underlining the legal rights of Indigenous Peoples that are often and flagrantly disregarded, but also Indigenous ways of knowing, being and relating (Tupper, 2014). So, a study of Indigenous Treaty rights and its abuses asks students to reconcile breaches of Treaty law with a settler colonial idea/imaginary that sees Canadians as law-abiding citizens with much to learn from Indigenous conceptions of Treaty. Once settler consciousness is expanded in this way, teachers can learn how the "land, valued and disputed, is at the heart of Indigenous-settler relations" (p. 473). Tupper's (2014) teacher candidates spent time "studying the provisions, spirit and intent of the numbered treaties, including their negotiated terms for on-reserve education" then considered how these were foundational but broken promises that have led to historical and present injustices against Indigenous Peoples and ongoing settler ignorance (p. 479). Critically and crucially, however, Margaret Kovach (2013) of the Pasqua First Nation suggests that teaching *from* Treaty is perhaps not the same as teaching *through* Treaty. Indeed, as Tupper (2015) acknowledges elsewhere, practices of revealing ignorance do not necessarily destabilize a settler worldview. Kovach (2013) stresses that Treaty for Indigenous Peoples is "an active relational" process of enacting *sacred* agreements that "include[s] seeking continuous counsel and dialogue on matters that have bearing on the parties involved" (p. 112). She strongly suggests that without engaging with Treaty as verb, the futurity of its spirit would be lost, and it would become "one item among many in a curriculum that seeks to ready students for a job market and not for life as citizens in a still-colonized land" (p. 112). Kovach's concept of Treaty thus suggests more is needed beyond destabilization of settler identity.

There are, therefore, settler psychical, structural and relational limitations for the hope to move from Reconciliation as the outcome of a procedure to a continuous commitment in teachers to new configurations of relationships. In attempting to facilitate a pedagogy of decolonization informed by the then ongoing TRC discussions, Madden and McGregor (2013) found that what is "sayable and doable" in classroom spaces is still constrained by the colonial pedagogical encounter (p. 379). Even before decolonization can be perceptible, the proposition of unsettling teacher identity assumes teachers "who are conscious of their social, cultural and historical positions, and associated emancipatory possibilities, as well as capable of challenging colonial ideological, epistemological and ontological commitments in various cultural processes, including education" (Madden & McGregor, 2013, p. 373). Unsettling, suggests Schaefli et al. (2018), demands that one is ready to dismantle

"epistemologies of ignorance" that are constantly being reinforced on a personal and collective level (p. 477).

This is perhaps much to ask of a settler teacher education course, required or otherwise, or even a whole program. Scott and Gani's (2018) research discuss conflicting evidence of just how reconciliatory teacher education programs have become. They also found that teacher candidates and teacher training institutions can be "overwhelmingly supportive" of Indigenous perspectives when framed within a neoliberal diversity lens, but not at all supportive of the relational implications of such knowledges and perspectives, including "the need to recognize the constitutionally enshrined collective rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada" (Scott & Gani, 2018, p. 172). This contingent support also suggests that unsettling settler consciousness is an ongoing but consistently contested and limited project. Between 2012-2014, when I was an MA student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)/University of Toronto, in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning department, none of my required courses, all taken alongside current teachers, referred to Canada's colonial history as a concern for teacher education. I made a personal choice to take an Indigenous Knowledges in Education course as one of my electives. Until writing this paper, I thought that course had unsettled my *perfect stranger* identity, which Potawatomi-Lenapé scholar Susan Dion (2007) describes as a position of privileged ignorance. This privileged ignorance is a stance from which White settler teachers consciously or unconsciously resist engaging in good relations with Indigenous Peoples while simultaneously claiming cultural disqualification and denying the role Whiteness plays in maintaining this ignorance. Now, I am not so sure. Much of my unsettling work has so far been in the form of internal reflections on my own consciousness, leaving me institutionally rewarded but still a stranger to Indigenous students and their ways of life. Higgins et. al. (2015) reminds me, however, to be wary of binaries such as familiar/strange. I am reminded that, while I was studying Indigenous knowledges in education at OISE, I simultaneously became part of the Bead and Read circle, part of what was then the new Indigenous Visual Culture Program at OCAD University. I brought in my course readings to discuss with my community there and so was welcomed into conversations that expanded them into the worlds of Indigenous literature, storytelling and material cultures. I learned to bead weave well enough—technically and in a good way—that I was trusted by my community to facilitate the circle for a semester. As I have foreshadowed earlier in this essay, I draw on and weave relationally through similar experiences that have contributed to my becoming as a transeunt listener.

Through hopeful listening to concerns for belonging alongside calls to unsettle my thinking suggests the possibility of "unlearning" settler colonial identity and so opening my consciousness to *re-learning* (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018). My own definition of Reconciliation now implicates my commitment to the wellbeing and self-determination of Indigenous learners as inseparable from my settler position while I recognize the need "to come together in solidarity and seize the opportunity to learn what it means to be a good human being" (Burm, 2016, p. 52). I suggest that learning to be a good human being is not conditional on one's blood or what lands and waters nourished one's ancestors. It is a deeply ethical and necessarily binding call to all our kin. Such is the logical and ethical futurity of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education, as I see it here.

From Unlearning to Re-learning: Reconciliation as an Expanded Ethical Capacity in Teacher Candidates

> I am questioning what it might mean to resignify "reconciliation." What new space might be created through simultaneously using and troubling this concept in order to move beyond the prevailing constructions in [circulation]? What is gained and what is lost in purposely positioning our work in conversation with what is often referred to as "the era/age of reconciliation"? (Madden, 2019, pp. 294-295)

In focusing on the development of a "de/colonizing" theory of reconciliation education, Madden (2019) inserts a slash in 'decolonizing' to acknowledge but make productive the fact that "efforts to challenge and pursue reconciliation within colonial systems are embedded in those same systems and re-grounded in their associated logics and practices" (p. 300). Madden (2019) proposes a framework that encompasses not only the TRC's exegesis and calls, but also centers Indigenous counter-stories, active critique of how Reconciliation is conceived and enacted, and the resurgence of land-based ways of knowing. Madden's (2019) framework urges "engagement that extends beyond reflection and dialogue" (p. 304). It also urges attention "to instances and perspectives that exceed prevailing constructions of reconciliation" (Madden, 2019, p. 300). In this final section, I focus on what I gleaned, through my transeunt listening, as a new space of re-learning in excess of teaching as framed through prevailing teacher education, curricula and teaching contracts. Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) similarly cast Reconciliation as "newly re-imagined relationships [becoming] the ethical space of engagement for moving beyond the status quo" (p. 66). In their study of school principal leadership, the authors conceptualize Reconciliation in education as an "*Indigenist agenda*, [my emphasis] a discourse that makes space for non-Indigenous peoples to situate themselves as being responsible for taking up Indigenous issues in diverse ways" (Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020, p. 58). These "diverse ways" also exceed how teachers are taught and taught to lead other teachers. They find their source in deep personal commitments not stated in their job descriptions, including "developing close, personal bonds" with Indigenous students and their families, Elders and communities" (p. 62). Just as Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) suggest that a "relational acumen" beyond "traditional senses of school operations" is needed to access this space, Madden (2019) links *excess* to a relational model of continually re-imagining (of) Reconciliation education (pp. 63-67). "Excess", according to Madden (2019), "can teach about the protocols, norms, and forms intended to solidify and secure [phenomena like reconciliation]; [can attend to how] excess reconfigures space wherein thought can confront, provoke, and orient anew" (p. 300). Similarly, in their work with teacher candidates in an Indigenous education elective, Lisa Korteweg and Anishinaabe educator Tesa Fiddler (2018) not only expose their students "to the pain and suffering of Indigenous [P]eoples . . . but also to the dynamic and rich [Indigenous knowledge] that continues and contributes to environmental sensibilities, community sustainability, and ancestral-spiritual connections with the Land and all creatures" (p. 269). Like Madden's (2019) framework, this implies a critical excess is needed to shift "towards a stance of openness to reconciliation as a process of (re)learning and building relationality" (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018, p. 269). They also state

that teacher candidates must still "realize that there is a conflict of teacher narratives where who they want to become as settler / Canadian teachers clashes with responsibilities and commitments they should enact [with and in] Indigenous" contexts and actively challenge the former (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018, p. 269). Further, they suggest, there must be a shift away from the institutional expectation of teachers to be "nice, fair, polite (apolitical)" professionals to expectations of teachers being "rooted in a commitment to restitution of Indigenous rights, reclamation of [Indigenous knowledges], and self-determination" (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018, pp. 257-263). Such a commitment goes beyond unsettling; it advances a re-imagining of who future teachers should be.

This commitment includes the stories we embody and perpetuate as teachers and requires re-learning what it means to be in relation as entities of land, water and place-based sacredness (Phillips, 2020). Exceeding typical settler introspection, my reading/listening of Tupper (2020) teaches me the potential of "(re)storying" settler colonial consciousness, despite how easy it is to "slip back into the comfort" of the settler imaginary (p. 89). Tupper's (2020) writing goes beyond reflection and guilty ignorance to "overtly connect [her] memories and experiences in the past with current colonial realities" by "(re)creating memory" through her relationship with land (p. 94). Doing so, for her, transforms a "desire for ignorance" into a desire to live in contention with her own settler existence and re-remember ethical relation (pp. 98). Elsewhere, Kanien'kehá:ka scholar Kiera Brant-Birioukov and colleagues also consider (re)storying—as in Archibald's (2008) *storywork*—important, especially with teachers (see Brant-Birioukov et al., 2020). "Integral to *storywork* as an active pedagogy involves a conscious acceptance of one's role in a holistic process", which I understand as not only content-delivery, but a commitment to truth-telling (Archibald, 2008, p. 111). For Regan (2010) truth-telling in storywork includes taking responsibility for sharing Indigenous counter-stories of resistance, refusal and resilient resurgence to not only engage student teachers but also engender teacher identities as learning with and in support of Indigenous futurities (Madden, 2019). Importantly, these futurities and one's own ethical teacher identity imply actively exceeding the bounds and maintenance of a Canadian imaginary and colonial state; it must include, at least for me, an embodied advocacy against anti-Indigenous racism in and beyond the classroom (Lorenz, 2017; Scully, 2018).

Further, what is often missing from much truth-telling literature, including the TRC's calls to action, is our speaking, listening and being truthful in relation to land and other more-than-human relatives as a necessary condition of Reconciliation (Madden, 2019). As Donald (2021) reminds us, whether I am listening for hopes of self-determination, de/colonization or counter-storying, this must happen while engaging with a place on planet—or Mother—Earth. Donald (2021) maintains that "Indigenous-Canadian relations will not be repaired and renewed by an educational commitment to provide students with more information about Indigenous [P]eoples" or, I would add, settler scholars and educators simply generating more knowledge about ourselves as settlers (p. 61). As an educator and knowledge holder, Donald (2021) sees that his "most important contribution" to reconciling Indigenous-settler relations has been his walks with fellow educators, including non-Indigenous educators, on the land guiding them through stories and shared physical movement. He says of these fellow educators that they "walk themselves into kinship relationality" (Donald, 2021, p. 61). Donald's (2021) insights raise questions about how much conventional research, discourse and

teaching can contribute to the re-learning that needs to take place, and how accessible this re-learning process might be.

As a transeunt listener, I have attempted to move through teacher education discourse as an active participant. While I have taken many walks through the local meadows, in the nearby woods and along its many waterways while writing this paper and now consider these walks integral to my knowledge synthesis and individual knowledge claims, I have done so as a White settler who has, at least part of the time, been isolated from other people(s) by a pandemic—without kinship beyond what I have read, my own perceptions and my private encounters with the more-than-human. While teacher education programs have begun incorporating land-based pedagogies and to include community relationships and their contexts into learning syllabi, these practices are not consistently centered or supported across Canadian universities (Scully, 2018). While it seems fair to ask teacher candidates what it would mean for each and every one of them to have relational access to the land on which they live, it would be unjust to ask traditional knowledge holders to share their insights with every student. As I walk "in the body" through the local forests and "in the spirit" through Truth and Reconciliation discourse, I begin to understand that feeling kinship with other humans and beyond—including my/our *spiritual* relatives—requires "us to move from thinking that we are discrete beings separate from the natural world to being held in a web of relationships" (Markides, 2023, p. 2).[6] It requires me to move from being alone and dislocated to being deeply connected to and in relationship with all things and places, including the future teachers and students whom I cannot yet imagine (Markides, 2023; Airton, 2019). From this perspective, reading as a transeunt listener feels like what Métis scholar and educator Aubrey Hanson (2018) calls "relational encounters" with literature—and in my case, academic literature (p. 314). I feel a sense of spirit missing from my settler colonial curriculum, which I feel compelled to further kindle in my curriculum theorizing, teaching and life more broadly. My transeunce motivates a desire to "show up" for Reconciliation across all my own geographies, which "does not require an Indigenous initiator or necessitate additional labour on the part of Indigenous [P]eoples" (Madden et al., 2020, p. 68). Yet, relational re-learning also seems a necessary next move if we are to do more than enact additional futurities that simply unsettle (and so commodify and temporally fix this unsettling).

On September 30, 2021, I attended the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation at Beechwood Cemetery, an event sponsored by Ottawa's Beechwood Cemetery, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and Project of Heart. While walking, my own spirit called me to slow down

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[6] In Indigenous and indeed ancient Christian wisdoms, "spirit" and "matter" are not opposite poles on the same spectrum. "Physical" does not mean "non-spiritual" while "spiritual" does not mean "non-material", however counterintuitive they have been re/presented in dogma or severed from pre-colonial wisdoms (R. W. Walker, personal communication, December 4, 2024; see also Walker, 2021). Thus, like Rose of the Carrier Nation, I am not pre- or post-religious; my spirit is inspirited with all my experiences of faith, including those of my ancestors and which I may re-learn from all my more-than-human kin around me (Howe, 2002). I welcome my reader to consider their own spirit as they read across my academic offerings in this essay.

and attend to how I make meaning of Reconciliation in transeunce and in transit across geography. Afterwards, I was privileged to view a screening of *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*, a stop-motion adaptation of *Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past* (Blackstock, 2020). Whether in the film or the book, a reader/listener learns alongside the protagonist about the need for belonging, for shifting one's consciousness and for noticing how this shift creates new resonances in mind, body, place, heart and spirit. This was a glimpse of the relational resonance that teacher education and research must seek to re-learn.

Since that 2021 autumn day on and near the leading edge of the turtle's shell and through to the finalization of this essay in late 2024, I find myself however keenly aware that I am (such as I am and cannot be otherwise) taking and offering a great academic risk in calling for Western and Indigenous knowledges and Peoples to walk strong together, including a robust and multivalent discourse of spirit. I am also morbidly aware that—as we approach the 10th anniversary of the release of the TRC's Final Report—much has yet to be done to establish a so-called era of Truth and Reconciliation, now perhaps swallowed whole and unborn by a new, global trend of ostensible therapeutic benevolence in which the nation state is positioned as the healer of the relationship (Moon, 2009). There is still much denial of Truth and its teaching in Ottawa, based on the reports of my own teacher students. It is largely surface-level; meanwhile, it is now not uncommon that White and many equity-seeking communities and their children bully and assault queer and trans youth, of any background, in Ottawa schools with impunity. And more broadly, there is much sadness, doubt and turning away. Even the Yellowhead Institute has opted out of their commitment to monitoring the take up of and meaningful action in response of the TRC's Calls to Action. In spite of this and even because this, I urge, like Haig-Brown (2008) does, that the shared material world we find ourselves in today, with all its/our crises and terrible denials of relationships, calls on us collectively as a privileged species or global human nation—in the sense that there are, traditionally and if we are to take Indigenous ways of knowing-being-doing *seriously*—water, sky, plant and animal nations as well as other more-than-human nations and that we are beholden to them as kin. And so, by logical and faithful extension, our spirit worlds may be—or need to be—brought into kinship, necessary for finding kinship in the flesh. Such are the futurities my transeunce now welcomes me towards, at least privately.

I thus believe I would be remiss in my ethical relational responsibilities if I did not acknowledge at least a few truths, hopes and fears for readers to seek transeunt pilgrimage. During this essay's attenuated gestation in the editorial womb—and I will be attending to this metaphor, or more of a metonym, shortly—I have continued my transeunt reading across and beyond Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse to include its implications for human and more-than-human relational ethics and actions more broadly. I leave them at the end of this article as relational offerings for potential transeunt trajectories of not only unlearning but also re-learning.

In 2023, the Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies published a special issue which celebrated a bringing together of Francophone perspectives on addressing the TRC's findings. I posit that this special issue encapsulated the present limitations stemming from notions of

unsettling and unlearning as constrained by the futurities of curriculum studies and teacher education discourse—as a discourse of unsettling and unlearning without the obligation of re-learning. For example, Duquette et al. (2023) found in their review of how Quebec teacher training curricula are responding to the TRC that Indigenous cultural and historical perspectives are generally still materially and epistemologically sidelined. Teacher candidates receive the curricular message that teaching perspectives other than the dominant nationalistic narrative are optional, while any direct address of settler colonialism is still framed within a Eurocentric conception of history, nation-building and so-called progress. Melançon (2023) further suggested that minoritized Francophone communities are complicit in the settler colonial order of Canada, yet historically and culturally tend to focus only on Anglophone oppression of and competition between Francophone and Anglophone communities, effectively denying a sustained address of settler colonialism in Francophone contexts. Like Melançon (2023), Moisan et al. (2023) attribute this limitation to nationalistic and identity-grounding myth-narratives harboured and sometimes reinforced by Quebec Francophone educators that cast the history of early French settler-Indigenous relations as equal and united against a British colonial threat, and so the resulting and surviving Francophone settlements and cultures as enlightened and even themselves equal to claims of Indigeneity. In this way, I suggest, a settler colonial, Eurocentric identity becomes difficult to question—not just in the curricula examined by these authors, but by virtue of a focus on the settler identity as an essentialized and exclusive binary. Boelen (2023), however, offered her Francophone audience a way of intervening on settler identity construction through the address of spirit or spirituality in education. Boelen (2023) noted (or rather echoed from across decades of uncited scholarship[7]) that the TRC found that the need for spirituality in education was integral to Reconciliation. However, the topic remains taboo in many Eurocentric contexts of Canadian education despite the perennial suggestion in my reading that a deep awareness of our connection and interdependence with each other and the more-than-human world might meaningfully interrupt the settler colonial thinking that currently limits truth and redress.

Once again, some scholars have perhaps not yet learned to read as a transeunt listener. In his book chapter "The Wâhkôhtowin Imagination: Walking Pilgrimage as Resistance and Resurgence in Settler Colonial Spaces", non-Indigenous theologist Kenneth Wilson (2024) relates that his research over the past several years has attended the question of whether walking pilgrimages "can help non-Indigenous people begin to understand ourselves as related to each other and the world in which we live—in other words, whether those walking pilgrimages can generate a sense of wahkohtowin in us" (p. 52). Referencing Donald's (2021) article, Wilson (2024) makes the following statement out of which he cannot quite walk himself:

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[7] I encourage submitting authors and readers of this journal and curricular subject to read as a transeunt listener across decades and even centuries of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship and other cultural production, including in the contexts of relationship denial or re-building between first and newcomer.

> I find myself wondering, though, whether settlers can learn from ideas like wahkéhtowin. To be specific, I wonder whether walking pilgrimages can lead settlers to a recognition of the ways we are related to and dependent upon the land around us. That has been a difficult question to answer. The epistemological, ontological, and cosmological divides between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples make it hard for the latter—that is, for people like me—to fully understand concepts like wahkéhtowin, never mind put them into action. Most of the time, my explorations of this question end up concluding that settlers can get close to practicing wahkéhtowin, but that our deeply ingrained ideas about the world as subordinate to and separate from its human inhabitants make it difficult for us to fully engage with it. I also find myself wondering whether other peoples who have experienced the bite of settler colonialism—those who have been forced to resist its logic of elimination—might find themselves more attuned to something like wahkéhtowin, compared to the settlers who have invaded their territories. (p. 53)

Wilson (2024), like many scholars of curriculum in Canada and beyond and of course their teacher students, still embraces his perfect stranger positionality as if is the right and only way, space or place for him to be. Instead of walking himself into kinship relationality—as Donald (2021) clearly (in my projected transeunce) welcomes him to do or at least imagine as possible—Wilson (2024) abrogates his own ethical relational potential in favour of exploring vicariously the relational potential between Donald's (2021) work and a non-White scholar's textual commodity. In response, I suggest as a future direction of curriculum studies and teacher education research that careful consideration be given to how we are dividing human and more-than-human empathy in all contexts of our shared and interconnected existence.[8]

Perhaps more directly related to Truth and Reconciliation, I suggest that two more negotiable futurities might be possible. In their recent literature review of scholarly perspectives of Truth and Reconciliation in pre-service teacher education, Tupper and Omoregie (2024) attempt to "[circulate] ideas and [provide] insights into the re/conceptualizations and practices that hamper or open possibilities for achieving the educational goal of reconciliation" (p. 552). They offer a view that their "targeted review of the literature provides a significant contribution that challenges a dialectical evaluation of efforts to advance the goal of reconciliation" (Tupper & Omoregie, 2024, p. 552). They point once again to the "spirit" of land-based education but somehow, in my view, leave that word, "spirit", unspirited and without re/connection to the spirit of Treaty or its spirit of mutual aid beyond

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[8] Even as I write this paragraph, many of my friends and curriculum studies colleagues are fervently unsettled by the results of the most recent US presidential election. I offer the dense and perhaps choking breadcrumb of thought that such a result was not due to right-wing rhetoric or anything that the president-elect did or did not do. My transeunt listening of this public discourse suggests that the root cause is what I am currently theorizing as a *division of empathy* between communities who should be allied. I leave my reader to consider their own potential complicity in hierarchizing one equity-seeking group or cause over another and the full consequences for relational ethics, especially as we look forward to a likely partisan shift in federal governance north of the border—a border we still maintain.

contract.[9] I do not mean to compare Tupper and Omoregie's (2024) approach to my own literature review here in this essay or diminish their efforts to reach a curriculum, history education and policy audience, but I suggest that a conventional treatment of the literature continues to invisibilize, however unintentionally, a great wealth of relational data. I use "wealth" and "data" strategically here, to relate the neoliberal and hypercapitalist language these (primarily history education and social studies education) authors choose to re/present the voices of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse and the future hopes they offer. But I also suggest that we do the same in curriculum studies and our teaching—yoking, as Tupper and Omoregie (2024) do, our futurities to (what I read in transeunce) the increasingly spent hegemony of conventional relational frameworks like, for example, those of Tuck and Yang (2012) and Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013). I mean this in the sense that these discursive places are, to my reading, inhospitable to kindred imagination. In fact, these places may decouple and leave to wither the material and imaginative capacity of our shared humanity (Phillips, 2025). This decoupling includes but is not limited to what some scholars, such as Garba and Sorentino (2020), suggest is the effective collapse of past and future relationships into an Indigenous-non-Indigenous binary, thus foreclosing enfranchisement of racialized non-White and diaspora communities—who endure through semiotic traditions and thrive through evolving cultural imaginaries despite no access to ancestral lands—from so-called decolonial futurities, whether they be settler or Indigenous.

Instead, I invite all readers to imagine, in their capacity as transeunt listeners, what it means to them and the author when they read that *we are all treaty people* as we move together across time, space, geography and theoretical topography toward whatever this place will become in future (Chambers, 2012). As Chambers and Blood (2009) write, "Whether we are [I]ndigenous or newcomer, today our tipis are held down by the same peg. Neither is going anywhere" (p. 274).

This said, Tupper and Omoregie (2024) do leave hanging fruit for our critical and spiritual sustenance, saying,

> Power is a significant category in *pre-and post*-colonial [*emphasis* added] politics; it was and is the enabler of subjectivation and racism. Power imbalance generates the excluded middle that provides the logic for fabricating racial binaries of superiority/inferiority, developed/under-developed, and the savage/civilized. Power sets the rules for who gets what, when, and how. (pp. 510-511)

As I traverse Tupper and Omoregie's (2024) reading of Cree/Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket and Wapsewsipi Cree scholar and poet Dallas Hunt (2020), I notice co-constituting pre/post-colonial politics engendering an *eliminatory logic/logic of elimination*. Readers familiar with the topic of this essay might recall and contemplate how Patrick Wolfe's (2006) famous phrasings have become "ubiquitous as countless scholars embrace the phrase 'the logic of elimination' and point to the fact of [settler colonial] invasion as 'a structure not an event' that invokes his work without even needing

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[9] cf. Kovach, 2013; cf. Mills, 2017

to attach his name to this formulation", while very few scholars consider the assumptions being brought into their work through such deployment (O'Brien, 2017, p. 251). In direct contestation of such logics as taken for granted in our theorizing, Kanaka Maoli scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (2016) argues that without purposefully engaging with "enduring indigeneity" as counterpoint to settler colonialism studies theory and its oft-shallow or acritical deployment by many scholars across many fields, one runs the risk of propagating "another form of elimination of the native" in which it remains status quo to "foreclose or bracket other formations . . . in ways that may sidestep how they are not only entangled, but also are co-constituted", ultimately producing "a binary of settler and native" (n.p.). Kauanui (2016) offers two senses of "enduring indigeneity" as counterpoints to a logic of elimination. The first is "that indigeneity itself is enduring—that the operative logic of settler colonialism may be to 'eliminate the native'. . . but that [I]ndigenous [P]eoples exist, resist, and persist" (Kauanui, 2016, n.p.). The second is "that settler colonialism is a structure that endures indigeneity, as it holds out against it" (Kauanui, 2016, n.p.). The generative, rather than eliminatory logic here, is then that "indigeneity is a category of analysis that is distinct from race, ethnicity, and nationality—even as it entails elements of all three of these" while being purposefully mindful that "indigeneity is a socially constructed category rather than one based on the notion of immutable biological characteristics" (Kauanui, 2016, n.p.). Re-learning from White Earth Band Ojibwe historian Jean Maria O'Brien (2017), and rejoining with Kauanaui (2016), we must seriously consider if Indigeneity as we implicate it as a null curriculum when discussing Indigenous-non-Indigenous futurities might yet sustain settler colonial "assimilatory campaigns of infinite imagination" in our theorizing and teaching (O'Brien, 2017, p. 249). In my view, such logics are always-already a human potential, as we form communities (with kin) and attempt (or not) to share the finite land and resources of/birthed by Mother Earth. As theorists and educators, I worry deeply that we are in fact holding static our thinking, our students and ourselves in liminal spaces and places of endless discomfort and evacuative unlearning. In reading, writing and teaching in this way we might be perpetuating what I would call an ethical void of infinitely *liminating futurity* in which future good relations between each other and the more-than-human world are forever left unborn or even unconceived.

I was warmed by the most recent works of Brant-Birioukov (2024), in which she asks us to trust that her and her ancestors' creation stories are true and not only worthy to be read as such by history education scholars, but worthy of being listening to and learned from by non-Indigenous scholars and students. She asks:

> What if I told you that the journey of Sky Woman is not a fable? What if I told you this journey is not a story of a woman who spontaneously emerged from parting clouds and befriended a turtle? What if I told you instead that this was a story of a woman spiralling into a downward depression of grief and bereavement? A story of a young woman who fell in love with a handsome lacrosse player she could not be with. A story of a young woman who, alone and pregnant, was forced into exile as she grappled with the terrifying darkness that is deep, bone-aching depression. A story of an expecting mother who understood the urgency to create a

> safe place to birth and raise new life in. If I told you this story was true—would you believe me? (Brant-Birioukov, 2024, pp. 112-113)

While not explicitly saying so, or using my words, I suspect Brant-Birioukov (2024) is asking me/us to be transeunt listeners as we engage with Indigenous knowledges.

In my ongoing commitment to transeunt listening, I traverse the recent writing of Markides (2024) as she offers the wisdom of Métis aunties as scholarship. As unconventional as this may be, she suggests that such scholarship is

> . . . a touch-stone or route marker for what is ahead and [and which may] not include a literature review or standard citations. Instead, the entirety of [this article] is the source of inspiration and the wellspring of scholarship that has in-formed these first passages. Why bend to academic conventions [or fear of cruelty]? Rebellious blood flows through these veins. (Markides, 2024, p. 1)

In the spirit of Markides (2024), who includes Two-Spirit folks as her kin and women colleagues, I invite all my kin to read my article not only as a different kind of scholarship, but as a different type of scholar—a transeunt listener. I conclude in an unconventional way with this thought of mine:

> And so, what if I whispered to you that I felt ready for a *Great Remembering*, across all the dreams of our ancestors? What if I offered to you that I had *re-learned* enough to meet you, some day before this incarnation of the world ends, as kin? What if shared with you that I want to have children of my own, and raise them in a good way and towards futurities that would best nourish them and their own kin in world(s) I cannot yet (or only) imagine? What if told you this is all true—would you believe me, or at least trust that I believe in myself and each other together?

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Endnote

Between the initial inception of this paper in mid-2021 and its updating in late 2024, this concept has transited my thinking and theorizing. It now includes my hopes and fears for the future of our planet and kin within and goes beyond the contexts of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education. As of the time of writing this sentence, Google's

nascent AI web search summary cannot provide any kind of summary or definition of transeunce. ChatGPT claims that transeunce possibly stems from medieval Latin scholasticism's *transeunt* or *transire*, which mean a passing through, and describe causation that extends beyond the agent's subjectivity. This might be distinguished from purely immanent processes, which remain contained within the agent itself. The same gestating AI entity suggests the possible Spanish/Portuguese cognate *transeúnte*, meaning "passerby" or describing someone who is temporarily in a location without establishing permanence. Returning to its metaphysical incarnation, Thomas Aquinas (2014) in *Summa Theologica* (1274; first mechanically printed 1464) draws attention to a motile causality of transience and transeunce. Aquinas (2014) suggests that God's actions are both immanent (existing within) and transeunt (having effects outside Himself) as part of the process of creation. For example, according to Aquinas (2014), God's act of sustaining the universe has transeunt effects in the existence and movement of entities, broadly construed. While I lack the space to follow the progressive movements across Western printed thought, it bears noting that Aristotle's (ca. 350 B.C.E./1925) thinking in his *Metaphysics* (containing his "First Wisdom") oscillates between potentiality and actuality or the process of moving from potential to actual as often requiring transeunt causality (my own transeunt reading). And we could follow time's arrow to many modern thinkers on affecting and effecting movement such as Baudelaire (circa. 1859-60; see Baudelaire, 1964) and Benjamin (circa. 1922-44; see Benjamin, 1999) for more literary, arts-based and academic, curriculum studies-adjacent apertures into transeunce.

Some readers may notice that I have not cited the adjacent literature on oral histories and its paradigmatic understanding of listening and/as witnessing. However, this omission is intentional. I find that such literature rejects the written word as a lesser relational medium in favour of the ostensibly more authentic oral accounting and its closer proximity to relational meaning-making. In the contexts of fraught histories and conceptions of history (and one's present/future agency or responsibility in witnessing such history), *vis a vis* my conception of transeunt listening, this literature nevertheless reinscribes a mastery of what listening and witnessing means *in text*. Simultaneously, this fixing implies that the reader is *a priori* unable to understand listening and witnessing in the very medium it is codified, while implicitly encouraging, as an expert source, citing this text as what listening and witnessing can or should mean. Instead, here I attribute Jennifer Markides (personal communication, December 18, 2024) and her methodological work behind the introduction to her recent edited collection as inspiration for verbalizing what I mean by listening (Forsythe & Markides, 2024). To navigate the settler colonial, heteropatriarchal expectations of academic publication culture while still introducing her collection's authors in ways that truly honoured their intentions, Markides *listened* to herself reading each chapter. She also listened to her own editorial reading notes and the words of contributing authors shared in conversation. Such a listening meant attending to the hopes and fears she could hear in the authors' words, but also Markides's own affective *a posteriori* encounters with the words of the authors, however difficult to encounter and dwell in. For Markides, much like my transeunt listening, this was a careful movement through the words of others as places of subjective transformation that affected ethical, real change in how authors' ideas were then—as more-than an ossification of voice—re/presented in text and so could be heard by those prepared to listen as they read.

Chapter 3

Relational Lacunae and (Re)Turning: Towards an Inspirited Relational Research Methodology for Kindred Futurities

> But my heart is like a claw machine
> Its only function is to reach
> It can't hold on to anything
> (Sloppy Jane, 2024)

> Clearly, something is terribly missing, some essential ingredient has been neglected, some necessary aspect of life has been dangerously overlooked, set aside, or simply forgotten in the rush toward a common world. In order to obtain the astonishing and unifying image of the whole earth whirling in the darkness of space, humans, it would seem, have had to relinquish something just as valuable—the humility and grace that comes from being fully a part of that whirling world. We have forgotten the poise that comes from living in storied relation and reciprocity with the myriad things, the myriad *beings*, that perceptually surround us.
> (Abram, 1997, p. 270)

> As such, it was probably inevitable that human politics and history often intruded upon, and frustrated, attempts to have a personal encounter with [land and spirit]. Specifically, attempts at engagement—practical or otherwise—frequently ran into the problem of how one came to be there in the first place. This tension was exacerbated by the *a priori* positing of an essential Western deficiency that can be filled by the radical alterity of nature (and the [indigeneity] assumed to be contiguous with nature). Although this move made non-human nature a spiritual and emotional resource for self-fulfillment, the highlighting of [non-Indigenous] shortcomings also raised the uncomfortable possibility that [non-Indigenous] people might never have the lasting connection to nature that they sought and that such relationships might be difficult to consummate or might only be achieved in fleeting encounters. It also potentially gave natural encounters a guilty tinge.
> (Muir, 2011, pp. 384-5).

What Could a Relational Methodology be, and Why (or how to) Care?

Throughout this methodological treatise, I attend to what I think is the most important methodological call I left for my reader as I concluded my literature review of Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse and practice as a relational curriculum of intersubjective transformation (Phillips, 2024). I, as a non-Indigenous scholar of education who is nonetheless committed to a truly relational turn in education, took “a great academic risk in

calling for non-Indigenous and Indigenous knowledges and Peoples to walk strong together, including a robust and multivalent discourse of *spirit*" (p. 24). I urged, like Haig-Brown (2008) does, that the shared world we all find ourselves in today, with all its/our crises and terrible denials of relationships, calls on us in our curricular praxes as members of a privileged species or global human nation to resonate in mind, body, and spirit together with the premise that there are—if we are to take Indigenous ways of knowing-being-doing *seriously*—a cosmology and cosmos of more-than-human nations, and so attend to the fact that we are beholden to them as *kin*. And so, by logical and faithful extension, our spirit worlds may be—or need to be—brought into kinship, necessary for finding kinship in the flesh. While I cannot alone claim or attempt such a fulsome discourse on my own, in this methodological essay I attempt to bring together a core way of thinking-being-knowing in educational research as needed for true relational relationships across difference in research and teaching. I offer throughout my writing here that this means a re-unification between notions and practices of *ethical relationality* and *kinship relationality* through what I propose we share, across all our relations: relations of, to, and with *spirit*. I thus consider transdisciplinary and transcultural notions of ecological kinship — further reading writings on relationality as perhaps reaching for the same — which suggest that spirit is real, animate, and inextricable from any relationship. While the implications of relationality suggest that I cannot alone define what 'spirit' is and so I do not claim to represent it in this paper, I offer a starting point for inspiriting methodologies by, at the very least, describing how we might both impose or glean into obfuscating 'lacunae' in our praxes, charging that our dis/ability in describing what spirit is stems from self- and socially-imposed perceptual and representational limitations that could be accommodated through new, collaborative representational approaches. I include an account of how such an offering also attends to the relational risk of opening spirit into a space and place of shared meaning-making, including the limitations of 'risk' as colonial. I end at promising apertures for relational methods in theorizing, interpreting, and representing relationality inclusive of our relationships with spirit.

Métis scholar Judy Iseke-Barnes (2010) advocates for understanding — or reclaiming — writing in academia as a practice of *spiritual resistance*, or a way to critique "theoretical conceptions of what constitutes 'valid' knowledge and understand struggles for survival and resistance to domination in educational institutions" (p. 211). This is true amidst a context in which relationality, as a word, is widely used in academia as a theoretical construction without

acknowledging its ontological implications, sometimes or perhaps now usually to the point that the word becomes a floating signifier. This is a profound methodological (and existential more broadly) concern given our (or at least my) enmeshment within an increasingly neoliberal and hypercapitalist academic industrial complex in which we continue to be complicit in commodifying such ideas — ideas that ostensibly challenge us to reimagine how we live our lives. Increasingly, words like 'relationality' should imply but do not widely engender ethical and pragmatic reimaginings of how we conceive of ourselves, each other, the more-than-human world, and all subsequent and vast implications for education. As cross-cultural philosopher Jarrad Reddekop (2014) argues,

> …the political and cross-cultural sense in which questions of relationality are 'in the air' today entreats us to ask about relational ontology not as merely an abstract theoretical question. It is rather one richly rooted in a lived and contested political and colonial terrain, which those of us who might wish to critique the dominant dynamics of 'modernity' from within the Americas [and increasingly Earth's biosphere today] both inhabit and must engage. (p. 8)

Indeed, as settler colonial studies scholar Keavy Martin (2023) advances, relationality, including kinship and by logical extension I would argue also ethical relationality, is not (or perhaps not simply, I would qualify) a metaphor. Martin offers a cautionary retelling of how Commissioner Alexander Morris at the negotiations for Treaty 6 used "relationality as a rhetorical device aimed at securing the 'surrender' of [these] lands" (p. 219). Importantly, the words of the Indigenous signatories of Treaties, shared to open relationality for newcomers, were appropriated while the conceptual or perceptual technologies underlying what was offered to Morris and later settlers were discarded and an alien — to Turtle Island and its many Peoples — algorithm of relationships was imposed. This alien relationality was imposed onto the land, all its many biosocial more-than-human entities, each new settler, and resisted by each Indigenous person onward (Phillips & Ng-A-Fook, 2024). Retelling all the relationship-denying consequences of such a commodification of concepts would take much more space than I have here but include centuries of attempted genocide and ongoing systemic violence against Indigenous Peoples to this day. What is often missing from critiques of western ways of knowing and being typically conducted via deployment of settler colonial studies theory, however, is that such relationship denial is a pan-species problem: it is at the heart of both our presently malignant democracies

and increasingly poisoned and fractured biosphere. My key concern in this essay is that educational research as an enduringly colonial/izing discourse in fact risks appropriating relationality towards maintaining both epistemic and ontological dominance, despite what futures we may say we want: unsettled, decolonized, truthful, reconciled — relational. In fact, what is rotting at the heart of *western/ized* ways of knowing and being is itself a denial of full relationality, even in ostensibly decolonial discourse on relationality. From hereon I use the problematize the word "Western" (typically capitalized) as 'western/ized" to hold in my statements the reality that all humans are susceptible to being colonized or becoming a colonizer, but are neither intrinsically nor monolithically "western" by virtue of their existence as particular human beings (cf. Paradies, 2020). Colonialism is always a complex, strategic denial of or violent hierarchizing of relationships, and is maintained by settler colonial lifeways as much as it is through essentializing discourses of indigeneity (Kauanui, 2016).

At this juncture of my introduction here, I feel I should attend to the relational ethics of risk as implied by my (2024) original, risky call to and welcome of other theorists into a multivalent discourse of spirit as a potential conduit away from the intractable limitations of dominant approaches to realizing any relationally complex praxis, such as one of truth and redress. Any attempt to forge or reimagine relationships is always-already 'risky,' because relationships are inherently and ecologically complex; any project of decolonial reparation and rebuilding of relationships is inarguably vastly more so, as Martin's (2023) account of settler treachery — which continues to propagate into the future through lasting and violent colonial systems — demonstrates. Implicated in a transcultural and open engagement with spirit is indeed the risk of further harm through appropriation and weaponization of Indigenous (or other marginalized peoples) ways of knowing-doing-being. However, I contend that concepts of risk are typically skewed and deployed towards maintaining the colonial, neoliberal, institutional (and so systemic) status quo rather than considering different and potentially better relationships.

As I attempt to show throughout this methodological treatise, inseparable from the matter at hand — the possibilities for relationality as limited (or not) by our willingness or ability to conceive of relationships — is presently not in theory or practice particularly risky, personally or methodologically. Consequently, words like 'relationality' are deployed without risk to authors who continue to enjoy the privileges of colonial life or, perhaps more relationally, without risk to the status quo of colonial systems of privilege and who or what is worthy of care. As I later

conclude, I cannot logically or ethically claim to alone revive the decolonial spirit of relationality, and so cannot predict the outcome of such a project. Nevertheless, the globalized status quo is so nakedly cruel in its unsustainability for all life, perhaps because we lack methodological awareness that any attempt to enact decolonization is always-already in relation with colonization (physical or psychical; cf. Kauanui, 2016; Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2024) and we appear to forget that those moments of first contact could always have been (or could be) different (cf. Adams, 2021). Indeed, in educational research and practice we (humans together) presently maintain, through our methodologies, a binary of Indigenous/non-Indigenous when we abrogate, based on who or what we are biosocially constructed as in the present moment, our responsibility to relate and so hold in abeyance what I see is the very 'thing' that might help us better relate across difference: *spirit*.

As I unfold in the following sections, I offer that what has and continues to be voided from our discussions and applications of 'relationality' is an always-implicated relationship with spirit. In fact, the original discussions of Treaties (pre- and post-contact) here on Turtle Island included within their covenants equal consideration of water, sky, plant, animal, and spirit nations as sovereign—deserving of respect equal to human communities—and equally related to us as human relatives (see Mills/Ma'iingan, 2017). Spirit as both ontological and epistemological is perhaps difficult to define in English — a language that lacks what Potawatomi ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2012) calls "the grammar of animacy" inherent to how languages Indigenous to Turtle Island teach and help relate the world to learners. Through such a grammar, "when you come upon a certain plant, when you come upon those strawberries, for example, [you] are connected to ways of knowing and to history and to a *spiritual* tradition that … connects you to a wealth of belonging to place [emphasis added]" (Kimmerer & Whybrow, 2017, para. 17). Although Kimmerer suggests that western/ized sciences are moving towards recognizing some kind of personhood in non-human ecological agents, she (2012) holds that "in our scientific language, our [English] terminology is used to define the boundaries of our knowing. That which lies beyond our grasp remains unnamed" (p. 5). Western/ized academia largely leaves out of its representation of knowledge what it cannot 'see.' English has great strength in "the richness of its vocabulary, its descriptive power", but beneath its semiology "something feels missing, the same something that swells around you and in you, when you listen to the world" (p. 5). Academic language, or rather European academic language *vis a vis*

Indigenous languages as equally knowledge-rich, according to Kimmerer, creates a patterned surface that "hides an empty center, like a gorgeous tapestry over a sacred wall" (2012, p. 5). Indeed, even here, in this paragraph in which I quote an expert diplomat between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing (see the citation impact profile of Kimmerer, 2013), what is "sacred" or what is "spirit" becomes something described only by its absence or assumed embedded essence somewhere beyond a western/ized fabric of knowledge and so, curiously through a textile/tactile metaphor, also perhaps a plane of what is perceptible.

What is at stake for educational methodology if spirit is 'there' and 'here' but left hidden? Mi'kmaw scholar, professor, and activist Marie Battiste (2010, 2014) has for decades now advocated for the need for all peoples to "nourish the learning spirit." However, I charge, "spirit" becomes easily mystified or left as a private qualitative or emotional experience when we leave the word hanging as something one either understands innately or is stranger to (Phillips, 2024, 2025a). The effect, I worry, is that when a scholar or educator uses the word "spirit", what is intended is a kind of metaphor for a private subjective experience outside the bounds of what can be represented and so shared in education, or as some kind of vague 'emotional learning' mode that is enriching of but simply in service to a learning goal/object. However, spirit honoured as animate and in ecological relationship with our intellectual, psychical and physical existence is not simply a metaphor and cannot logically be co-opted into a bourgeois epistemological vocabulary in service to greater accumulation of academic wealth, as is arguably still the goal of dominant education globally. It cannot logically or otherwise be co-opted because it, as I will hopefully provide a thread of thinking towards considering, implies notions of relationships as ethically charged and interconnecting through responsibilities that transcend what is written (or constrained) in policy or curriculum. Spirit as alive and foregrounded in relationality may thus bring into tangible proximity what might otherwise be abstractable notions of ethics and kinship. The consequences and possibilities of this rejoining could be ultimately existential for us as a species and inspire ways we might teach towards new futurities, or futures not determined by present real and imagined limitations of onto-epistemological arrangements, of relational education.

I further consider how relationality *should not be* essentialized or dualized across planes of human difference, attempting a starting point and language for researching, teaching, and representing knowledge in academia as a deeper practice of what Métis writer Jo-Ann

Episkenew (2009) calls “taking back our spirits.” I do so in the spirit of spiritual commensurability across all knowledge traditions, including storytelling and so academic writing as stories equal to all the biosocially entangled stories we make sense of our world through and so propagate it. As Davis and McMurtry (2024) suggest in their own vocabulary invention, doing so might for myself and my reader make western/ized conceptualizations of relationality strange, as ‘WEIRDness’ (western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic nature) in a more relationally expanded space of possibility — particularly a space of possibility in which we might seriously consider what spirit might be or mean for education. As it is for Davis and McMurtry’s (2024) expanded genealogy of knowing, this essay is not “the place to debate the problems and merits associated with losses of some languages and hegemonies of others, [even as such losses are] evidence of an erosion of wisdom, possibility, and truths” (p. 257). Yet, even as the “distinction between animated forms and non-animated phenomena is among the most popular strategies for separating what’s alive from what’s not alive” across western/ized schemas, Davis and McMurtry (2024) note that if we look beyond the pale limitations of education research discourse or the modern assumptions embedded in its English, we might see that our vocabularies are changeable and expandable to include more nuanced ideas of what is animate, and so what animacy might yet mean (p. 21). Even in their introductory dis/entangling of ‘nature’ and ‘human,’ these authors are able to articulate the possibility that “knowledge is a living form that inhabits and is inhabited by every person and agent and artifact and event” (p. 28).

This methodological work is part of my deeper commitment to engendering what I am thinking of as a *Great Remembering* (cf. Donald, 2016), through which I am nascently considering how we all have ancestral knowledges that might be recovered or simply a human capacity for forging new interpretive relationships that may or may not map onto linear (western/ized) histories. While my current empirical projects focus on Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse as an emerging and expanding relational field, in this paper I mean to consider relationality as having broader relevance. Thus, while, as I have stated elsewhere, my understanding of reconciliation means returning Turtle Island to a semblance of pre-colonial governance and care, I do not consider such a future exclusive of any human being. My stance on worldview dialogue might be similar to what I see as Davis and McMurtry’s (2024) past and futurity-inclusive methodological project of “transcreation, where we collect what we’ve learned

into our current best effort at a re-invention of [research] ... a consideration of what [praxis] might be(come)" (p. 257). I do so with hope stemming from the humane truth that no language, as is often assumed via misinterpretations of sociolinguistics across academia and popular culture, creates entirely separate realities but rather each language habitualizes certain perceptual biases (Pavlenko, 2014). Presently for me this means at least a private and individual kinship with spirit as *spirituality*, coupled with our ethical responsibility to attend to *spirit* as an animate agential kinship integral to all relationships, and so a threshold praxis for ethical relational work in education, including the re/presentation of our data, ideas, and intentions.

To be clear about what I am presently able to be clear about in this essay, I cannot alone and in such a limited medium define what spirit "is" but rather offer that it *is*, alive and real. I do, however, consider 'spirit' as importantly distinct from 'religious belief' or even adjectives like 'spiritual' or objectifying nouns like 'spirituality' which typically denote a human-centered practice in which we are alone with our feelings about something that does not have to be understood by ourselves or others as materially real. As I will arrive at later, spirit is a living member of our ecologies — broadly construed. Such a premise defies dichotomous thinking because it (at least attempts to) dissolves binaries of natural/unnatural, imaginary/material, animate/inanimate, truth/untruth, and so on. This premise also implicates that spirit is thus integral to our ethics — and so ethics of relationality. In kind, I write in larger service to a personal and professional commitment to what Van Horn, Kimmerer, and Hausdoerffer (2023) conceive within the limitations of English as "kinning": kinship as verb. As a collection of words, this treatise is therefore an offering of how we might in future praxis work towards expressing more than notions of birthright, but how we might *become* kin. I offer here that we should consider at least contours of new language or interpretive and representational tools that might help us include in our work that which might appear to us privately and fleetingly in our language as "twinkling, illuminated from within" yet which might vanish when we put the usual words to a page or knowledge into a curriculum (Van Horn, 2023, p 1). In this way, metaphors are more than the word 'metaphor' typically suggests; how we imagine is as materially significant as how we arrange ourselves materially — together these *imaginaries* are not fantasy, but material, past, present, and future-shaping technologies. I thus acknowledge and disclose for my reader that in this paper I am not necessarily doing more than reaching for spirit myself — but that I am trying to think through how I might share my concern for something that I still feel

and know to be there — as a means of extending concern, or care, towards what a typical western/ized worldview might enable. At the same time, I do posit that, by way of spirit as something that co-constitutes me and that I am part of, I can offer glimpse of how I, in my flesh, perceive spirit and so how that engenders relational care, or ethics, for me. Throughout my writing here, then, I wonder what our technologies might look like, including our research practices but also burgeoning "things" like AI, if we included within them (as we ostensibly teach them through our own knowledge creation) responsibility and relationship with spirit (see Phillips, in press, where I address AI specifically as potential future kin).

While I will later and further address the relational reality that essentializing who, what or where (and what distinguishes a who, what, or where) is able or enabling of relational truth is an always-already relationship-denying proposition, I first introduce relationality by synthesizing a selection of multidisciplinary western/ized perspectives, such as but not limited to sociology (e.g., Mannheim, 1936; Schinkel, 2007), theoretical humanism (e.g., Drichel, 2019), and posthumanism (e.g., Ceder, 2018) alongside a selection of Indigenous ways of knowing in educational research (e.g., Moreton-Robinson, 2017; Moodie, 2019; Tynan, 2021; Wilson, 2008). To re/connect relational thinking between western/ized traditions and Indigenous worldviews, I read and write towards commensurability between non-Indigenous/Eurocentric conceptions of relationality and Indigenous scholarship on relationality. I thus consider a topography of relationality "as presence or absence" across methodology as a curriculum (Chambers, 1999, p. 147). Along the way, I ask my reader to consider this essay as not simply a methodological treatise, but a relationally methodological work about relationality. Such a work suggests that I must consider what I term *relational lacunae* in my own reading and theorizing. A lacuna could be most readily understood as:

- an unfilled space or interval; a gap;
- a missing portion in a book or manuscript;
- a cavity or depression, especially in the matrix of a bone, organ, or other part of a body.

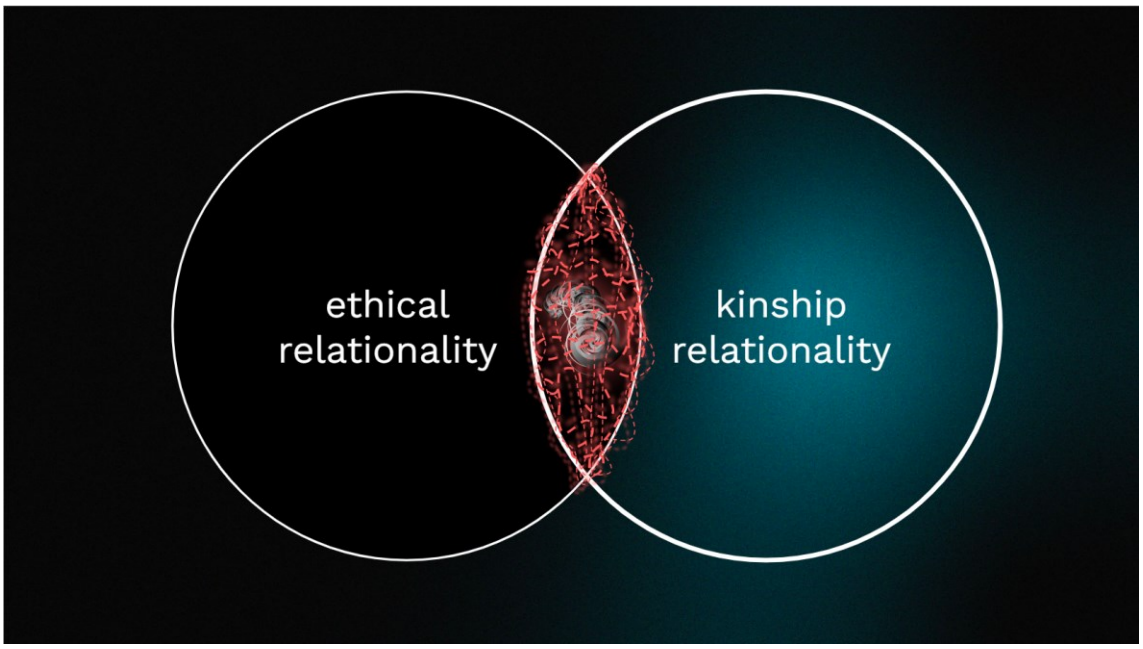
Enjoining *lacunae* with *relational*, I suppose a relational lacuna would thus be a perceptive void of relational data, meaning-making, or expression/representation. In other words, relational lacunae are there, real, but otherwise unobservable from but only made so through the affordances of perception we afford ourselves and each other as scholars or human beings. In the context of research and teaching, I suggest this includes the representational, perceptual and

conceptual affordances we have for spirit. As I have observed elsewhere (Phillips, 2024), the word “spirit” is consistently included across educational discourse, including discussions ostensibly in service to relational praxis, without not only a clear referent but without discussion of what its referents could be. This floating signifier further occludes how an engagement with such consequently mystified references might affect and work towards real effects in how we go about research and teaching. Like an organic lacunae, in the present context of educational research and knowledge dissemination, relational lacunae such as spirit are not vacuums yet are not knowable from the outside unless transected or filled in with what was lost, meant, or otherwise made intelligible through some form of onto-epistemological affective — or affecting — technology, whether that be tooth and claw or scalpel, lasering textual analysis, or paintbrush, needle and woven thread.

As I illustrate in Figure 18, I consider throughout this paper relationality as ethical and relationality as kinship interconnected through spirit. Because, as aforementioned and as I trace later, spirit as ecological is both integral to any relationship and does not dualize possible modes of existence, spirit is part of our embodied perceptions in the world and so presents an opening into ways in which we might think about and represent spirit as both humanity’s kin and kinning interlocutor with the more-than-human. While spirit as lacunae is largely arbitrarily constituted by the structural limitations to or of our perceptual conditions in which we find or imagine ourselves, I see no reason why a sense of spirit cannot be discussed. Our limiting conditions include, of course, the ways in which we have been taught to know and represent our knowing. Yet, despite our potential individual dis/abilities, as human being we always have some form of sense-making potential shared across so many potential stratifications of difference. This is not to suggest difference is not important — without difference we would have no relationships including life writ large — but that we always have the potential to form new relationships across difference through sensual or (perhaps more ‘academicky’) sensuous curriculum (Gershon, 2011) of embodied experience; I posit that such enfleshed experience always-already includes spirit.

Figure 18

The Methodological Goal of My Paper: Re-unifying Ethical Relationality with Kinship Relationality Through Consideration of What Spirit Could Be.



Note. In this figure, I attempt to describe visually the methodological goal of my paper: re-unifying ethical relationality with kinship relationality through consideration of what spirit could be. Indigenous or western/ized, all knowledge traditions purport notions of relationships, ethics, and kinship. I suggest that what might bring them into fuller dialogue is spirit (centre). What makes spirit perceptible and experiences with spirit relatable, I argue, is more or less obfuscated by relational lacunae. These lacunae are thus constituted by but might be gleaned into through our own perceptual or representational repertoires (red lines).

Towards making such intelligibility possible, I attempt (and attempt to exceed) what Ahtahkakoop Cree scholar Cash Ahenakew (2016) implies is a necessary first compromise in making Indigenous and non-Indigenous sensual/sense-making commensurate in the future. I see in Ahenakew's influential work what I later interpret as the labeling of an epistemological-perceptual *disability* (in those labeled as non-Indigenous or otherwise 'settler') to engage in relational perception. I see this suggested disability as possibly accommodated by what Ahenakew calls *grafting*, or the carefully disclosed and articulated joining of Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and knowledges into not quite a unified entity but rather a kind of body of heterogeneous parts. As I intend this to be a relational essay, I will further attempt to

exceed this compromised hybridity by enfleshing my methodological concepts of relationality. In other words, we, including myself, as educational researchers anchored to ourselves as enfleshed human beings, make the methodological choice to relate or not relate certain data, meanings, or representations every time we write, read, or otherwise make sense of information. And so, considering the enfleshed valence of lacunae as an educational researcher implicates how our re/presentational choices cohere with our material arrangements and professed intentions within such arrangements. I insulate the 're' of 'returning' into (re)turning (to relationality) to anchor an explicit critique of my theorizing in this essay: that the words "relationality" and its word-forms are now co-opted by a curriculum studies, academic publishing material arrangement, and wider teaching and knowledge-disseminating and -claiming representational world of education and its research-industrial-complexifying culture. By this I mean and intend to provoke my reader into considering what they mean when they read or use such words in their writing, presentations, teaching, and daily academic life or beyond. I charge that many in wider educational research do not consider the full relational implications of relationality as it is — sometimes quite overtly — defined and theorized in published academic discourse or privately felt and experienced by all human beings and beyond, according to whatever or whoever's dis/ability. I propose that we often do not even consciously understand what we mean when we describe something as "relational," especially in educational research or the kind/kindred educational research we profess to want or work towards today. I argue that these terms have, quite dangerously for ourselves, our students, and our biosphere, become academically-propagated but empty signifiers rather than binding expressions of a deep ethical commitment to each other and the more-than-human world, with all the vast and fractally-branching implications such a way of thinking-knowing-being offers us and has always offered us as human beings. I therefore assert that and ask my reader to consider that our curricular imaginaries are presently and largely ethically and relationally disabled, but to allow ourselves grace in addressing the systemic anchors to such disabilities.

A Topography of Western/ized Relationality

Sociologist Karl Mannheim (1936) saw relationality as a solution to the logical extension of (western/ized) theories of ideology — what is true and what is knowledge is largely determined by the social, spatial, and other relational conditions of its generation. Mannheim proposed *relationism* as not only a foil to empty relativism, but also a utopian framework in

which scholars might put ostensibly incommensurate ideas into meaningful and productive relationships towards a better human future. Theoretical humanist Drichel (2019) suggests relationality has a history as deep as human existence, but that the very Enlightenment thinking that facilitates our construction of -isms and -alities has alienated the western/ized subject from a primacy whose "absence or disappearance from our lives [has put] us into crisis: we [have become] lonely, depressed, and ethically immune to the suffering of others (if not outright violent)" (p. 2). In other words, relationality connotes an interdependence and ethical co-nourishment between living beings — as being — even if modern isolate existence denotes the opposite. Ontologically, relationality is and has always been "there", yet othered in western philosophical worldview (Benjamin, 2015, p. 2) and everyday human interaction.

Figure 19

"The Isolator" by Lynn Skordal (in Drichel, 2019)

It is as if we wear epistemological gloves, suits and helmets that remove us from true relationality, using words to point to what we cannot, through western/ized language, access directly (see Fig. 19). Despite this constant out-of-touch existence, it seems we continue to reach for relationality. As Mitchell (2014) observes in the field of psychoanalysis, there has been over the past decades "what might be considered a 'relational turn,' in which mind has increasingly been understood most fundamentally and directly in terms of self-other configurations, intrapsychically and interpersonally, present and past, in actuality and in fantasy" (p. xiii). In attempting to establish a posthuman theory of educational relationality amidst this turn, Ceder (2018) asks, "What would a theory of educational relations look like if it did not focus on [separate] entities but instead on relationality?" (p. 7). Ceder admits that he has no answer — because prevailing and anthropocentric, "intersubjective theories have, despite their critique of individualism, used as their starting point the individual subject, rather than the relationality of the relationship" (p. 63). Relationality thus implicates a constant reaching towards an "infinite ethical responsibility" lost but deeply needed in our present moment of increasing human inequity and degrading biosphere (Ceder, 2018, p. 78).

Mitchell's characterization of a 'relational turn' (as experienced also across curriculum studies and educational research more broadly) and Ceder's theoretical predicament in the context of Drischel's humanist grounding suggests a few methodological concerns worth reiterating and spelling out. First, I would charge that Mitchell's observation is accurate — that across our disciplines (or field, in the case of curriculum studies and educational research) we have indeed followed a turn towards thinking of the mind (or thinking about our thinking) as about self-other *configurations*. I intentionally put these two understandings of relationality together because Cedar's dilemma is perhaps created by their own enmeshment within posthumanism as an individual-deemphasizing (read: human individual) project while it is nonetheless carried out by human agents. Thus, relationality becomes very much about the "relationality of the relationship" rather than the agents and embodied intentions of the relationship, whomever or whatever they might be, while the mediating agents attempt to think beyond their limitations as the particular agents that they are. As I explore next, this leaves Ceder and Mitchell without a reference point for what Cedar himself gestures towards — ethical responsibility amidst implication of infinite responsibilities. That is, it is evident that there is a feeling of something missing or indescribable, and that something is necessary (including to be

described) for the kinds of relationships needed in education in our present moment, and that this something involves ethical guidance we should be heeding. I follow and extend Fitzsimons's (2002) premise that typical western/ized theories of being in education have been indebted to Heideggerian (e.g., 1968, 1977, 1987) notions of enframing — we equip ourselves to describe the limitations of our perception through language yet in doing so perpetually limit our reach into this lacuna. In effect, our western/ized assumptions keep us 'one step removed' from the concrete relationality in which we really exist always and already.

Returning to the arguably most common-sense discursive location from which our curricular understandings of relationality and relational responsibilities originate and perhaps where we are limited — law — sociology of law scholars Cloatre and Cowan (2024) advance a relational understanding of law or legality based in sociological concepts. Cloatre and Cowan (2024) educate their law audience that: "Relationality is inherently shaped by material possibilities. Rights and legalities unfold against a social net in which everyday actions and choices are shaped by what material connections enable or hinder and of the differential possibilities they create across society" (pp. 63-64). While these authors do not invoke the word 'ethics,' their writing strongly suggests a re-remembering in law discourse that the ethical as relational is needed. Such a discourse is needed for "thinking about new ways of what law *can* be, in and for society" in an era in which the rules of law must once again be reconceptualized in the face of human and more-than-human crisis and harm (p. 64). "Relationality scholarship," Cloatre and Cowan (2024) summarize helpfully, "inherently recognizes the fluidity of social life, but, within that fluidity, the relative permanence or otherwise of objects is harder to describe" (p. 67). Because typical western/ized constructions of relationality cast the agents of relationality as "travelling apparently unchanged through space and time, their existence and modes of action are inflected at different moments by their legal and social relations", the "micro-work that these objects are doing is co-constitutive of how [justice] is produced in the everyday and needs to be accounted" (p. 67). We thus must not only consider the relationality of the relationship but also the material reality *and agents/entities and their ethics* if we — as western/ized researchers and educators but also globalized humans more broadly — are to conceive of relationality as responsible, or source of intelligible responsibilities, as well as make sense of our coordinates within such an infinite web of responsibilities.

Cloatre and Cowan (2024) point to the work of Bruno Latour as a source of such a relational understanding, at least on a material plane of objects and actor entities as sourcing the ethics behind justice as codified into law. For the sake of my reader and the flow of this essay, here I take a bird's-eye view of relationality in sociology as suggested by Dutch Foucauldian sociologist Willem Schinkel (2007). Schinkel suggests that the work of Bourdieu (e.g., 1990, 1994) and Latour (e.g., 2001, 2005) represent two distinct positions in an otherwise co-constituting but mutually limited view of relationality in sociology or more aptly sociology as relational (and so in our case here we could extend this to educational methodology as relational). Radical Canadian sociologist François Dépelteau (2013) is in broad rhetorical alignment with Schinkel (2007) when he succinctly summarizes the understanding of so-called "relational sociologists" as indebted to Bourdieu: such thinkers "depict a strange universe of relations. Structured relations make the individuals as they are and the resources they can use. Again, this is an odd world where the mind, memorized experiences, emotions, values, identities, worldviews, anticipations, knowledge, and physiology of the individual simply do not matter to explain human behavior" (p. 169). In contrast to Bourdieu's classical sociology of relationships as a system of commodity exchange, Latour's earlier 'relationist' sociology worked to deconstruct the constructivist structure-agency dichotomy, and later even the society-nature dichotomy so that the "artificial" boundaries of the relationships within what is considered "the social" are dissolved: "the social consists of societies, and if 'society' is a conceptual tool in order to make specific constellations of events intelligible, the social is not limited to human beings, but it is extended to all beings that influence each other, that are perceptive, in some way, of each other" (Schinkel, 2007, p. 713). However, Schinkel (2007, p. 725) sees a "serious problem." Sociology itself presents an intrinsic relational limitation as it attempts to account for relationality, and so it is in the concept or utterance of relationality in which ostensibly competing notions of relationality both converge and disperse. For Schinkel, this is because we are dealing with Foucault's "law of what can be said" (Foucault, 1969, p. 145). We then find ourselves on the other sides of our pages or screens as relationally limited by our discourse as relational technology. As technological extension of ourselves, our discourse and our commitment to its maintenance "is what defines the system of enunciability of statements, and at the same time it is the system of the functioning of the statement" (Schinkel 2007, p. 726). In other words, we would need a "position outside sociological discourse to observe exactly" what

we mean by ‘relationality’ (Schinkel, 2007, p. 726). Here I wonder if this position might be a sociologist considering themselves as (for now, at least) always a human capable of re-describing the boundaries of what is perceptible to a sociologist.

Returning to relationality as experienced on a shared material plane of relationships from which we as western/ized humans typically derive our sense of right and wrong, I see an opening into remaking laws of what can be said through a sociological view of law. International law scholar Ilan Fuchs (2024) provides two concise definitions to distinguish but then intertwine ethics and (human) law: “Law is a formal system of rules enforced by governmental institutions. The law’s objective is to maintain social order, protect rights, and promote justice” (para. 9) While justice is underpinned by ethical values, legal systems are empowered by “authority from a local, state, or federal government”, which is primarily concerned with using its power to *enforce* laws and holding people “accountable for breaking the rules [and that] accountability ensures that following legal regulations works to everyone’s benefit” (para. 9). Conversely, ethics “is a set of moral principles guiding what individuals and societies deem to be right or wrong. Ethical values often stem from philosophy, religion, culture, or personal beliefs, offering a framework for personal ethics regardless of a government’s authority” (para. 12). However, Fuchs (2024) admits, citing Aristotle, that we can “acknowledge how ethical values inspired legal reform; American society [for example] was forced to re-evaluate itself” through public discourse on the ethics of slavery, civil rights, and more recently corporate and environmental responsibility: “As Aristotle stated, ‘Justice is that virtue of the *soul* which is distributive according to desert,’ emphasizing that ethical justice should guide legal structures as they evolve [emphasis added]” in likewise evolving social relationships (para. 40).

And so, what is the soul from which virtue flows, and where is it present (or not) in relationality at the sociological (and by extension other methodology genealogies)? Schinkel (2007) intimates that this might very well be something akin to *spirit*, and so I wonder might be both a door through which ethics might re-appear and a relation (which is always of course a confluence of relationships) from which we may learn from. Schinkel (2007) notes that Latour drew on “a tradition that has, certainly in sociology, been hugely ignored” (p. 713). This tradition is *metaphysical sociology*, particularly via Gabriel Tarde (e.g., 1999, 2001). “Looking at science,” Schinkel (2007) reveals Tarde’s spiritual connotations in the social. Schinkel notes that Tarde referred to a ‘pulverization of the universe’ as integral to society, or that, for Tarde,

society is everywhere and everything: “tout chose est une société, tout phénomène est un fait social” (Tarde, 1999, p. 58). Since every being is made up of infinite beings in our pulverized universe, being is always a being-together. More plainly, not only do people and culture exist relationally — everything does, including atoms, people, and galactic filaments made up of humanly (or perhaps western/ized rationally) unfathomable numbers of galaxies. Sociology in this way could see more than just human materiality as the only “substance” of the social to also include cosmological entities or even being(s). Indeed, beyond sociology, some western/ized thinkers are already working to understand the cosmos as relational rather than matter separated by vacuum (Davis & McMurtry, 2024); most recently, some scientists are now understanding that the universe itself is in constant relational spin, always turning (Szigeti et al., 2025). Returning to Schinkel’s central critique, however, this gestured-to sense of spiri-reality is occluded by Schinkel’s deployment of Niklas Luhmann’s (1984) observational logics that presuppose intrinsic “blind spots” in theorizing within a field. Here, Dépelteau (2013) relates that Luhmannian “relationism” once again results in the “disappearance of the persons as coproducers of fields of transaction. In all these cases [of sociological treatments of relationality], it appears that the importance of persons, with their unique attributes and capacities, is significantly diminished or simply denied by the sociologists” (p. 170).

I see here a register of spirit as such a blind spot, but not one that is extrinsic to discourse as human if we consider what or who could be agents within a given field of relationships. These agential entities include ourselves and our knowledges as alive and changeable, if we presuppose ourselves as part of the breathing-into-being of the discourse. Resonating with and adding to the words of complexity theorists Davis and McMurtry (2024), “knowers enact a world” in that humans and our kin together, whether bacterium, mineral, coral reef, wide-eyed student or disciplined scholar, “participate in generating meaning and form—which entails ongoing, context-dependent dynamics through which agents maintain their viability and co-participate in the unfolding of the world” (p. 177). What movements are included in these dynamics, and how do they allow (or not) us to acknowledge what counts as participating agents? Despite the caveat that we might already be caught in a western/ized limitation of subjecthood or more accurately personhood— only indirectly addressed by me here but presently a significant challenge if we are to further consider that relationality is always-already a concern of ethics and so our sense of justice — we yet share an enacted world. Even as western/ized humans, we do have interpretive

traditions that include consideration of how we as individual knowers make sense of all of our perceptions of relationships across biosocial existence, including the human tendency to include spirit as part of knowing, implicitly or explicitly.

Theologist-anthropologist Michael Houseman's (2006, 2011, 2024) study of rituals as human relational practices transversal between (and potentially unifying of) the material and spiritual worlds of peoples as well as commensurate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous (i.e., western/ized) lifeworlds may be of some help here. Houseman (in conversation with Navigante, 2024b) summarizes:

> I am specifically interested in bridging the conceptual and analytical gap between, on the one hand, what we might call "canonical forms of ritual", well-known to anthropologists and closely associated with traditional and/or non-Western settings, and on the other hand, ceremonial practices largely ignored as such by anthropologists, which are widespread in contemporary Western societies [...]. I now think of these two orientations as "action-centered" and "actor-centered" ritual or ritualization respectively. (p. 22)

Houseman is however quick to also address the possibility of binary thinking between these orientations and so maintain a relational understanding. In action-centered ritual or "special patterns of behavior", "ritual relationships are shaped and acted out, that are presumed to have been handed down by antecedent authorities (divinities, spirits, ancestors, sacred texts, etc.). Participants thus apply themselves to doing what significant others are purported to have done before" as responsibility to tradition (Navigate, 2024b, p. 22). Conversely in actor-centered ritual, "intrinsic value and efficacy" are attributed not to participants' outward behavior but to the "exemplary thoughts and feelings" their behavior is supposed to induce and/or express: "spontaneity", "oneness with nature", "openness to others, etc." (p. 23). In such common western/ized rituals, the intrinsic value is supposed to be sourced from a pre-Judeo-Christian, pre-colonial, pre-industrial, non-western, "one's inner child, one's spiritual self" (p. 23). Importantly, Houseman sees these rituals as part of all western/ized, secularized, individually but collectively significant human activities — as a kind of semiological solvent and binder still holding western/ized humanity together as humanly sensical. Instead of widely codified religious frameworks, ritual, including experiences with spirit, become more like changeable "orientations." For Houseman (2011), in contemporary western/ized culture these orientations enfold on each other through what he terms "ritual refraction" in which "existing or imagined

religious traditions are taken to provide not models to follow but resources to be inventively explored with a view to their personalization, that is, their adaptation to the peculiarities of the situation at hand and the sensibilities of those involved" (p. 11). Such rituals in turn "give rise to enhanced, refracted subjects spanning several contrary identities at once: the archetypal agencies the participants seek to emulate and the participants affected by the performances deriving from this emulation" yet largely through "immaterial" registers that are either kept private or alluded to with the vaguest of terms (e.g., 'spiritual experience'; 'oneness'; even 'mindfulness') (p. 10). Might we be doing the same in our ritualized theorizing of relationality, and so gesturing to some kind of refracted self in which spirit is felt but not necessarily materialized?

Some of my readers here may be familiar with Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson's touchstone thesis *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008). As I will attend to in the next section, I do not mean to suggest an easy equivalence between ritual and ceremony. However, I intentionally invoke notions of ritual and foreshadow (or briefly unshadow) those of ceremony here to suggest, in accordance with my main argument across this essay, that there is perhaps both much commensurability yet critical limitations of proximity between these praxes. I wonder if words like 'ritual' might particularly void something akin to spirit from what could be 'ceremony.' Critically, Houseman does not engage with the "divinities, spirits, ancestors" in either model of ritual, despite acknowledging that they are "authorities" in ritual, or at least perceived as such by the human(s) involved. Indeed, there are growing re-interpretations by non-Indigenous scholars of what were historically understood as "rituals" to be paradigmatically distinct ceremonies that intertwine and inter-transform the practical, personal, spiritual, physical and imaginative (Davis & McMurtry, 2024). Houseman leaves the question of spirit and its actual existence (as animate relative) as extraneous (or mysterious) to his theory because, adhering to western/ized anthropological principles, it is not observable — willfully leaving shadowed the very ritualized perceptual biases of his discipline. Houseman reduces the relationality of ritual to "the distinctive organizational features of ritual" exclusive of the subjectivities/entities involved (2006, p. 414). In doing so, he perhaps misses the ethical implications that each potential participant of the ritual brings into social relationship. My latent concern here is not that spirit is not represented *per se* — my words might suggest a treacherous slip into assuming that we must be able to see what we know to be true — but that any ethical relational potential it could raise is likewise avoided.

Adrián Navigante (2024a), Director of the Center for Transversal Thinking, seems, to me, to put a finger on this lacuna. In excavating the relational impetus behind cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's work (see Goulet & Young, 1994) which inspired Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's highly influential poststructuralist methodologies, Navigante suggests a lapse in relational thinking by "scientists [who are compelled to work] on a relatively stable object of inquiry. If that is broken or even threatened, not only the object but also the subjective underground is at stake, and the 'normal reaction' of scholars is a recourse to colonial mystification" (p. 20). Navigante (2024) suggests such aporia might be named "the lapsus of rationality" (after Lacan) in which the analyst is "blind" and resistant to what confronts them; he paraphrases Lacan in saying that our discourse casts such unstable subject-objects "outside, outside of everything what can be said and done in terms of rational intervention — closing the chthonian gate and feigning a bridge to the real agents" or relationships of the relationship and not bothering to develop the "disposition or the tools" for such discussions (p. 19). There is a curious elision under or between Navigante and Lacan's fingers here, a slippage that is perhaps the core of my methodological dilemma. If we are all constituted of relationships which include relationships with each other and all that might exit, the issue is perhaps less that we are "blind" — which problematically suggests both an intrinsic disability and that this disability is pathological. Rather, if we are to consider disability as relational (cf. Söder, 1982; Bury, 1996; Tideman, 2005), what makes an entity disabled or rather incompatible with the biosocial web in which it finds itself is not an effect of the agent but the relationships that constitute it. Even I must leave open the relational reality that what I mean by spirit might not be representable or representative of spirit. However, this does not mean that a representation, however partial, of its relationships to me and how such perceived entanglements affect (or even underpin) my relationships with other entities is impossible. In the same vein(s), it is possible that such a representation might resonate with another's experience of spirit.

Lasering through quite a bit of jargon, in other words 'relationality' remains reached for but suddenly out of reach and lost once gleaned by our relationally disabled western/ized epistemological, re/presentational technologies. As I will attend to next, I understand blinking out of existence, as a result, our not recognizing something akin to spirit, despite that all relationships imbue and are imbued by it. And so, a full relationality becomes lost to a privatizing of spirit as part of relationality. Rather than just refraction, relationality is totally

internally reflected — like a beam or photon of light bouncing off the reflective surfaces bounding the medium it has entered — and its teleology trapped within. In the case of relationality, I suggest that this medium is western/ized imagination and body as continually stabilized, individually crystallized, static and independently rational *yet invisibilized spirit-ful* subject. As cultural studies scholar Robert Cooper (2005) relates, across all typically operationalized notions of relationality:

> The human world becomes more and more relative, more transient and thus more fragile and indefinite. [Academic production] becomes a pure act of becoming and beginning without ever reaching an end, as if in pursuit of supports and props that threaten to disappear into latent space and time. Production thus re-lates not so much the formulable content of the world but the withdrawal of the latent. Relationality draws its power and action from the implicit and suggestive non-presence of the latent; it works by attempting to re-late and trans-late the uncapturability of the latent's placelessness and unlocatability. But every re-lational attempt, every connection, leads to a disconnection, to another question. (p. 1707)

Cooper (2005) goes on to conclude that in typical western/ized evocation of "relationality", what is latent — or shrouded in lacunae — "haunts the human world like an atmospheric presence which, strangely, appears only as the felt absence of an invisible something that does not wish to be seen" (p. 1708). What the "latent" is, for Cooper, remains directly unsignified and only "intimates itself as a mute and neutral state that tells us only of its essential remoteness and ungraspability [... despite its] immanence in all acts of human agency, the latent appears always beyond us, feelable but conceptually unformulable" (p. 1708). In my own work attempting to relate to the relationality of my research participants, I see, or at least feel, the same latent (often cast as of the unconscious or otherwise inextricably private, non-rational mind and so unintelligible in academia) as an unspeakable entity or agent of the relationship: spirit. Radical relational sociologist Christopher Powell (2013) proposes that to even glimpse the contours of this lacuna would "mean an epistemology that [applies reflexivity to itself and so] contains no residual dualist elements and therefore treats all social phenomena, including individuals themselves, as constituted through relations. This epistemology assumes naturalism and *monist materialism* but adopts an *agnostic stance toward realism* [emphasis added]" (p. 187). As humans with more-than-human relatives leveraging such an epistemological technology would

cast us not as “poor approximations of disembodied universal subjects, [but instead] as concrete actors, subject to social forces, pursuing our various and exigent goals” including the full diversity of possible standpoints from which we as humans make sense of the universe — and so including belief and what we believe in — as equally durable and, of course, in embodied relation (Powell, p. 206). This radical (from a western/ized standpoint) relationism thus “also has implications for the justification and negotiation of ethical claims, without implying one particular ethics of its own” (Powell, p. 188). This is arguably commensurate with broader thought (at least) on complexity (and as I concur with A. McMurtry, personal communication, 21 March 2025). I see no real barrier for us, as western/ized subjects, in considering spirit as an agent within complexity, in that complexity theory already holds together despite acknowledging that we cannot claim to know everything or may ever know everything, including what or who may be in relationship with us locally or cosmically.

Given that I am particularly interested in the ethical implications of relationality in curriculum and teacher education, with the particular methodological subject of Truth and Reconciliation curriculum and teacher education (Phillips, 2024), a reflexive radical relational framework for my purposes implies a co-constructive and inextricable accounting of the ethical within the relational and amongst those I call in as kin. Put another way, I feel I am compelled to address the ethical implications of spirit as real and as part of complexity in a way that offers opportunities for us (as humans) to think and act ethically; this includes considering, or perhaps more accurately honouring, that I am also ‘addressing’ knowledge and its inextricable spirit as animate. Commensurate with Powell (2013), “Why one wants to know something could matter as much as how one investigates it to the validity of the knowledge produced by the investigation” (p. 206). As I turn to Indigenous voices on notions of relationality as told by Indigenous scholars as well as refracted (or not) through non-Indigenous scholars, I ask that my reader keep in mind the motivation of relationality as already suggested by western/ized discourse: a (re)turning to — a latent call that is more than just a turn to desire — to an understanding of relationality as more fully relational and so ethical, however episto-technologically able we seem to find ourselves.

An Introductory Topography of Indigenous Relationality as Told and then Refracted

> “... if everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations.” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 2)

Indigenous concepts of relationality in education are perhaps inverse to western/ized articulations (Tynan, 2021). Rather than out of reach or gloved by language, relationality in an Indigenous research paradigm is a "threshold concept", or necessary for valid, ethical research and work in education (Moodie, 2019; Wilson, 2008). As "the core presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm", Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2017, p. 71) explains, relationality is inseparable from the social, psychical, spiritual and ecological. It involves "the interconnectedness of what people are doing and experiencing as the outcome of actions in the actualities of their lives and lands" and is "constituted by our histories, our culturally embodied knowledges and life force that connect us to our respective lands, our creators, all living entities and our ancestors" (p. 71). Relationality is then also relatedness, requiring "attention to the process of connection" as *kin* (Dudgeon & Bray, 2019, p. 3). Kinship relationality, according to Donald (2016), is a constant sense of care that extends "our relational network so that it also includes the more-than-human beings that live amongst us" (p. 10). These kindred entities include our cognitive resources, writing, and research, and can carry us "beyond the current socio-political reality, towards futurities that were whispered in the dreams of our ancestors" (Tynan, 2020, p. 10). This process, Moreton-Robinson (2017, p. 71) asserts, is an "historically enduring discursive formation that gives rise to distinct forms of thought", demarcating a necessary — at least for now — distinction between an Indigenous concept of relationality and how a Eurocentric academic worldview might interpret it: a worldview that continues to be dismissive, extractive, and otherwise hostile of Indigenous perspectives and bodies (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 2021; Barrett, 2021).

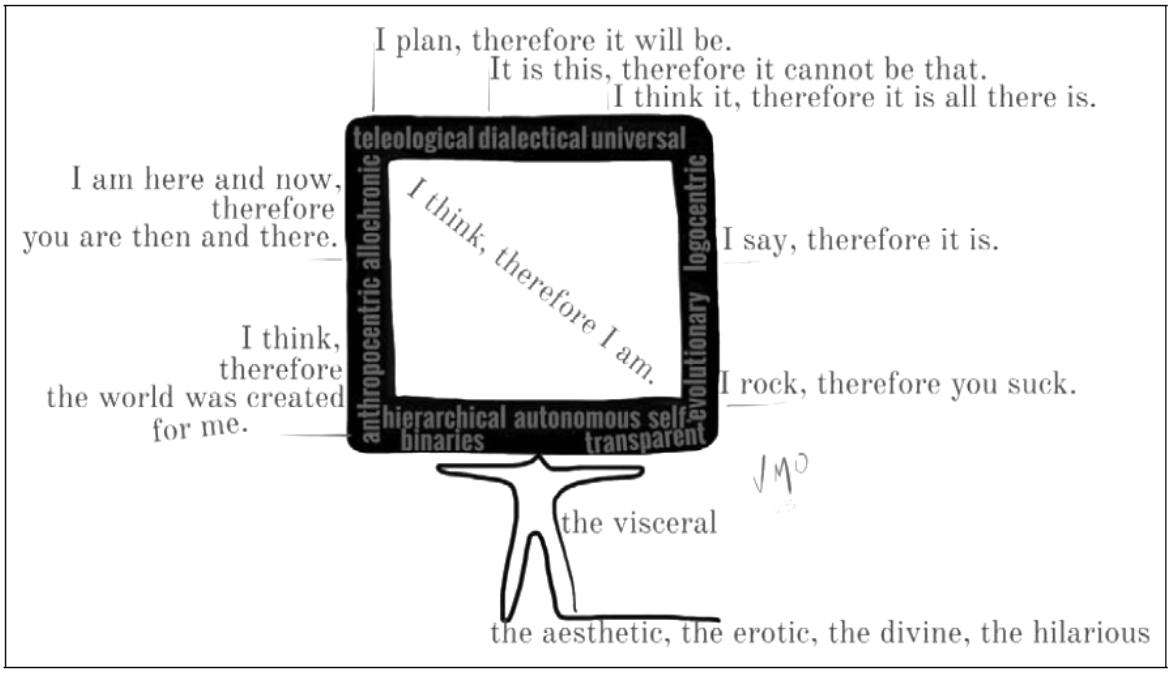
As a complexly intersectional yet white curriculum scholar (cf. Phillips, 2024), I do not mean to draw easy equivalency between other(ed) non-Indigenous scholars and Indigenous ways of knowing. In fact, at least at the beginning of my doctoral studies, my only academic claim to these ideas was that I am somehow also human; otherwise, I am an 'uninvited' guest on unceded 'territory' who was raised without strongly defined traditional bonds of kinship, history, and place. I have therefore been warned by my professors and ostensible mentors in my institution to be wary of claiming commensurable humanity across Indigenous and non-Indigenous lifeworlds. Likewise, Ahenakew (2016) warns of what he terms 'grafting' in much academic theorizing, in which non-Indigenous scholars ignore the asymmetrical power interface between academic institutions and Indigenous contexts when attempting to reconcile Indigenous worldviews with

inherently limited non-Indigenous models of thinking-knowing-being, missing, by un-virtue of a western/ized worldview, the very perceptual or sensorial — or ultimately fully relational — affordances inherent to Indigenous ways of life and knowing. Ahenakew (2016) draws on Andreotti's (2016) "Boxhead" (see Fig. 20) diagram to explain the limits of a modern western/ized subject:

> The cartography of the modern subject (reproduced here [as Fig. 20]) represents the frames of reference of modernity juxtaposed on a square-headed Cartesian subject who 'thinks, therefore he is' and whose relationship with the world is mediated by her/his cognitive repertoire of meanings, rather than by her/his senses. Each side of the square head represents different and enduring referents that circumscribe her/his relationship with reality. (pp. 334-5)

Figure 20

The Relational Limitations of the Modern Western/ized Subject as a "Boxhead" (Andreotti, 2016)



Like Drichel's (2019) masked thinker, "each referent [e.g., logocentrism in Fig. 20] brackets a way of creating meaning that buffers his sense of reality" (Ahenakew, 2016, p. 335). Recognizing that as a non-Indigenous curriculum theorist I "have inherited an imaginary circumscribed by specific referents and that these referents also form the DNA of our modern institutions and forms of knowledge production, especially educational and research institutions"

(Ahenakew, 2016, p. 336), nevertheless, as a human being who shares a great deal of real DNA with Ahenakew, I ask my reader to join me in considering the terms, reachings, and paradigmatic contours of relationality as I have and continue to introduce them in this paper as "contingent, contextual, tentative, and incomplete" starting points for thinking about educational research has or might conceive of relationality as more graspable.

"For those of us writing within academia", Ahenakew (2016) asserts, "the first small step we need to take is to make grafting visible. Making grafting visible means writing in a way that makes what is invisible noticeably absent so that it can be remembered and missed" (p. 333). Curiously, Ahenakew's metaphor is akin to my concept of lacunae in that it attends to what is missed and attempts to remember it as enfleshed. Although used in a limited way as a metaphor, "grafting" could also be used in a metonymic sense. Grafting is in fact a prehistoric (in the western/ized sense) human practice used across cultures and peoples to make two or more species of plants become one organism. As a horticultural (human intervention into plant life) practice, grafting usually requires one plant to become the "stock" or the base of the resulting organism that encompasses the trunk/stems and nutrient-sustaining roots, while the other(s) become the "scions" or the leafing, flowering, and fruiting part of the organism. Left as a relatively simple, closed metaphor, this means only one part of the organism ultimately gets to reproduce (the "stock" never propagates its genes). However, grafting can also happen without human intervention, and in ways that do not (as I read Ahenakew) suggest an arboreal hierarchy — in the sense that Ahenakew suggests to me that Indigenous ways of knowing are and would remain genetically unchanged in their superior (the desired scion or propagating part of the organism) relational sense-making ability. Instead, and apropos of a methodological manifesto on an approach to conceiving of research that I argue needs more than my own theorizing and sense-making body and spirit to materialize in any meaningful sense, I suggest a more porous notion of grafting as the non-hierarchical tree root systems that intertwine and inter-penetrate and act in community; naturally grafted tree root systems share strength through nutrients and resistance to environmental catastrophe, but in doing so also share their vulnerability to toxins and dis/ease.

As Papasechase Cree curriculum studies scholar and knowledge holder Dwayne Donald has taught me, this sense of shared relation, power, and vulnerability — responsibility — is the ethical heart of relationality as understood from within an Indigenous worldview. As Donald has

taught me personally and continues to teach his students, this ethical responsibility is thus shared between all of our relations, with humans as being in a particularly privileged position in terms of our responsibilities to maintain good relations between ourselves and the more-than-human world, especially as we (as human beings) exert increasing and increasingly disrespectful demands on this world, including the more-than-human inhabitants of our shared and finite planet. Important not to dissect into a binary here is that relationality as ethical contains within it the understanding that all humans are related as kin. However, as I will attempt to demonstrate here, this understanding is largely de-emphasized at the same time that our just as vital relatedness to and the full genealogy of the more-than-human is often displaced in discourse; I suggest that we need to re-remember and take seriously the fullest dimensions of kinship as integral to relationality for it to be truly ethical.

In Donald's (2012) initial conception of *ethical relationality* as informed by Cree and Blackfoot teachings, he summarized the concept as "an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (Donald, p. 103). Ethical relationality is thus a kind of perceptual capacity of "attentiveness to the responsibilities that come with a declaration of being in relation" (Donald et al., 2012, p. 535). Learning from personal communication with Donald in 2020, Kerr and Adamov Ferguson (2021) specify that such an attentiveness is proposed by Donald as "a way to unlearn colonial logics that disregard Indigenous peoples' knowledges and perspectives, and that portray Indigenous and settler peoples as occupying separate realities, and their different perspectives, experiences, and knowledges as incommensurable" (p. 708). Kerr and Adamov Ferguson draw on Donald's slightly later work (2016) to further relate the sources of ethical relationality, in which he answers his own question, "From what does ethical relationality flow?" As Kerr and Ferguson helpfully summarize:

> Donald (2016) draws together the Cree teachings of wicihitowin and wahkohtowin as promoting ethical relationality when taken together. He shares that wicihitowin refers to the "life-giving energy that is generated when people face each other as relatives and build trusting relationships by connecting with others in respectful ways," and wahkohtowin is to recognize and extend kinship relations with more-than human beings (Donald, 2016, p. 10).

However, while Kerr and Adamov Ferguson, both attesting to settler identities, acknowledge that "Donald points out that we cannot be ethical unless we appreciate that we are related, and that our future as peoples with all living beings on Mother Earth are already tied together", they methodologically retreat to a perfectly perfect stranger position (cf. Dion, 2007) in which they claim not being able to understand these terms by virtue of essentialized-racialized categorization (perhaps conflating race with culture), suggesting that they cannot offer (and so perhaps not achieve) a full understanding of ethical relationality because they are somehow always-already "partial" in the needed, embodied understandings. In other words, as I would characterize and have characterized elsewhere (Phillips, 2024) educational researchers, Kerr and Ferguson miss the relational point of Donald's (2016) relational ethics as well as the relational potential of all humans to extend kinship to more-than-human beings; as per Donald (2016):

> [E]thical relationality describes an enactment of ecological imagination wherein our thoughts and actions are guided by the wisdom of sacred ecology insights. Ethical relationality does not deny difference nor does it promote assimilation of it. Rather, ethical relationality supports the conceptualization of difference in ecological terms as necessary for life and living to continue. It guides us to seek deeper understandings of how our different histories, memories and experiences position us in relation to one another. (p. 11)

In other words, settler methodologies put into relation with Indigenous worldviews by settlers (but also perhaps by non-settlers as well) tend to somehow miss the meaning of difference as ecological (that is, difference — of any entity — not having any inherent valence outside the context of an ecological relationship) and that these ecologies of difference include the sacred. Commendably, Kerr and Adamov Ferguson (2021) concern themselves in a kind of hyper-vigilance of human ethics at what Celia Haig-Brown (2010) describes as the imprecise divide between deep and long-term learning through engagement with Indigenous Peoples and knowledges and appropriation of Indigenous knowledges. However, even when they cite Haig-Brown (2010) who calls on all scholars to deny ourselves the "luxury of inertia—continually posing the question to ourselves and our work" (p. 947), Kerr and Adamov Ferguson (2021) limit their voice to themselves as humiliated, flattened relational agents, respectfully ambivalent about any potential claim to have, as Haig-Brown argues is necessary, experienced change in their worldview of relationships. Exemplary to this essay is their discussion of a rock "as

teacher" — their description does not suggest the rock is animate or has spirit but rather is appreciated for its value in facilitating a discussion as it was exchanged between human speakers. Indeed, no sense of spirit or ecological recognition of the more-than-human is registered (or risked) in their discussion, and ethical relationality becomes entirely about human history and contemporary, constructed human identity.

Then again, Kerr and Adamov Ferguson (2021) appear more methodologically comfortable in engaging with Stó:lō scholar JoAnn Archibald's (2008) Indigenous Story Work (ISW) methodologies (guided by Stó:lō knowledges and teachings from Coast Salish Elders) as "a methodology with the capacity to engage complexity through story's ability to wholistically engage the heart, mind, body, and spirit" towards a methodology that is both Indigenous and academic (p. 708). Indeed, through this perhaps less precise methodology of relationality, Kerr and Adamov Ferguson (2021) begin to use the phrase "learn from", rather than "unlearn." However, their engagement with this learning is cast as vaguely personal understandings of animate "energies" beyond the institutional frame. Their representation of their methodological "heart and spirit" ironically suggests that a methodology cannot be equally Indigenous and academic, or that we must graft relationality onto an academic stock for it to function. In fact, they conclude with statements that abrogate their responsibility or even *ability* to understand relationality, explicitly deferring to a perpetual unsettled state of "humility" (cf. the oft- but only partially quoted Regan, 2010). When they cite Battiste's call (2005) to "centre Indigenous knowledge by removing the distorting lens of Eurocentrism so that we can immerse ourselves in new systems of meaning" (p. 127) they then paradoxically "chose to engage with settler stories that position [themselves] within the complicities of settler-colonial systems of violence, rather than" tell stories that re-centre and open themselves into commensurate experience with Indigenous knowledges and so remove and necessarily replace the cataracts of Eurocentric education (p. 713). Similarly, while they keenly acknowledge the importance of ethical relationality as a life-long learning process, Kerr and Adamov Ferguson make passive and obscure where and from whom ethical relationality might be learned, stating that "there is a great deal that non-Indigenous scholars can learn from the richness of Indigenous knowledges that inform Indigenous methodologies, but such learning requires relationships, mentorship, and significant time—led from the priorities of ethical relationality" (p. 713). Explicitly unstated, a reader (scholar, teacher, or student) can easily assume these researchers understand that these

mentors are human and similarly such priorities flow from humans, or particular (or even essentialized) humans who might grant otherwise inaccessible knowledge about expanded ecologies. Such a typically, ultimately inert methodology renders spirit or the more-than-human as a relational lacuna.

I see an entrenchment of inertia as a privileged and productive position for settler scholars to remain, a perpetual state of unsettling that does little more than produce more commodified knowledge about being settled (Phillips, 2024). This becomes glaringly obvious when we consider that Donald's most recent publication (2021) emphasizes that "we need a new story" — we as in a human nation, Indigenous *and* otherwise, in concert with more-than-human relations. This work of Donald's has been published and translated across disciplines. I see that Donald's work on walking methodologies/pedagogies (in which all are welcome to "walk themselves into kinship relationality") directly stems from his 2016 work in which an important statement(s) are often not cited: "The main insight that flows from these Cree wisdom teachings is that a purely human understanding of ethical relationality is a significantly impoverished version of those teachings in that it disregards *sacred* ecology. We need stories and mythologies that teach us how to be good relatives to all our relations—human and more than-human [emphasis added" (2016, p. 11). In my own conversations with Donald (personal communication, 31 January 2024, 07 February 2025), Donald has shared with me that he realizes now that his earlier writing/thinking was perhaps too focused on the human-human relationship and its enmeshment within colonial frontier logics (cf. Donald, 2009) as a particularly human and particularly Eurocentric-colonial concern (and so a concern of a particularly date-bound breakdown of relationships). Curiously, Kerr and Adamov Ferguson (2021) anchor themselves to the same paradoxically relationship-ossifying framework, stating, "We too are always already down the river in the fort as White settlers, yet seeking through ethical relationality to pull out of these downstream currents and engage out of the fort to learn" (pp. 712-13). The authors effectively suggest that they are and will always be bound to the fort and take respectful but relationally non-risky excursions, and in doing so only look for Indigenous scholars for "guidance." Donald (personal communication, 11 April 2025) agreed with my assessment that if we as educators and researchers only apply ethical relationality as a human-human or settler-Indigenous framework and do not include the more-than-human as equally important, then there cannot be any ethical relationality at work. And even further, and while he is still thinking

through this implication himself from his own community perspective in which such ideas are assumed nominal, he tentatively concurs with my assessment that what is perhaps missing in our relational frameworks is an explicit engagement with spirit; he shared with me that the Elders he works with have recently lectured him and other Indigenous educators and knowledge holders that they have but must not continue de-emphasizing spirit and spirit world in their work with students. The missing lesson here is that spirit is as integral to our ecologies, and ourselves as learners, as each other and the rest of our bio(spirit)sphere.

And here I arrive at the dilemma of grafting: the clear assertions and even invitation to work towards — learn towards — understanding all humans as kin who are together enmeshed in webs of relationships that include the fullness of the more-than-human while being severed — or typically discursively positioned and so taught to feel severed. This severing, assumed or leveraged by scholars across the Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary, arguably cuts along the same edge of (colonial) understanding as biosocial contexts of history, power, and identity that we all ostensibly want to overcome. I suggest that the problem is perhaps not full incommensurability but of limited assumptions of kinship and what kinship means.

In *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities: Beyond Domination,* identity studies scholar Avril Bell (2014) argues from within the "settler imaginary" of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States that a new relational imaginary can revolutionize the way settler peoples think about and relate to Indigenous difference. Bell's first premise is that essentialist practices of identity set up irresolvable tensions that lock settler and Indigenous subjects within "unhappy" colonial identities. Given that Indigenous Peoples have in fact not disappeared and are in resurgence, Bell argues that the settler imaginary works to appropriate rather than replace Indigenous authenticity into settler nationhood via symbolic merger. This is a cutting concern for my methodological project here: via Ahenakew, I do not mean to embrace a project of hybridity, even if that is what Ahenakew suggests, which Bell points out is already an asymmetrical position from which Indigenous Peoples are forced into and from which settler identities can move into and out of at will and as it suits whatever political or material ends they might have. Bell layers Homi Bhabha's theorization of hybridity via Alan Lawson's (1995) relational concept of the 'tripled dreams' of settler and Indigenous responses to their own indeterminate identities, a kind of performativity rather than essentialization of identity practiced by both settlers and Indigenous thinkers attempting to escape the colonial binds of 'authentic indigeneity.' Rejecting

such a project as ultimately assimilative (all can be symbolically re-enfolded into a settler colonial enterprise), Bell (2014) further calls for a new ethical relational imaginary in which settlers do more than simply recognize (e.g., Coulthard, 2014) Indigenous ways of knowing and being as autonomous but embrace them as the centre of a new imaginary and willingness to "engage beyond our own understandings and frameworks and to pursue relationships enlivened by care and responsibility before politics" (p. 22). A new relational imaginary thus implicates a new pre-politics of relation, but a relational methodology must engage in one carefully to avoid erasure of important differences.

If we take the core biosocial understanding of relatedness, we arrive at an entangled nexus of kinship. I lack the space to map a full genealogy or genome of kinship across western/ized and Indigenous thought and all possible attending concepts and schemas. However, I feel that I must attend to what I believe is the core lacunae at the conjuncture (or limited grafting) of Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings of relatedness and what limits a more fruitful yet ethical coalescence (a necessary intersubjective meeting of mind, heart and spirit that does not collapse difference). Bell (2014) concludes that a necessary limit of closeness or relatedness as "proximity" via Levinas (1987) is required for a new ethical relational imaginary for settlers in relation to Indigenous communities:

> Proximity refers to an ethical, rather than spatial, dimension in the relationship between self and other. It represents the ethical concern for the alterity of the other. … Respect for the alterity of the other, which is the characteristic of relations of proximity, involves an epistemological 'distancing'. Foundational to it is the unknowability of alterity. Hence relations of proximity can balance the tensions of distancing and relationality required for a relational imaginary. On the one hand, they preserve the epistemological distance necessary for indigenous autonomy and disrupt the categories of settler epistemological domination. On the other, they ground a relationship of ethical concern for the other. Proximity thus combines a form of 'distance' (epistemological) with a form of 'closeness' (concern). (p. 196)

Considering the relationality of such a proposition of relationships, I suggest that delineating ethical responsibilities in this way, measured and limited by proximity to relation, nevertheless binds us to certain colonial understandings of relatedness and responsibilities to kin. Here, then, I suggest that at the heart of the matter, what is in fact incommensurate across relational

imaginaries, is who and what we consider to be kin. Cultural psychologists Celidwen and Kelter (2023) propose that Indigenous and western/ized perspectives of kinship as grounded in prosocial behaviour, or how we extend our relational selves to create and maintain relationships, depart in three critical ways:

> 1. They diverge in terms of claims about the core motives animating prosocial behavior (for example, the advance of the planetary system in Indigenous approaches versus personal pleasure or rewards).
> 2. They differ in their assumptions about the scope of prosociality (to all living forms, including nonhuman life forms, versus a focus on close biological kin and transactional relationships).
> 3. They depart considerably in thinking about the rewards of prosocial behavior (gratification at the flourishing of the collective versus the personal pleasure of prosocial action). (p. 5)

'Prosocial' behaviours include intentions and acts of sacrifice, sharing, and compassion, which are, across humanity, intimately tied to one's perceived proximity to kinship with the other (which may be human or otherwise). Put another way, prosocial behaviours enact altruism or the concern for the well-being of others without requiring personal benefit or reciprocity; prosocial action in ecological contexts expands concern beyond care for humans to include other sentient beings and all possible future generations. In respectfully consulting the work and wisdom traditions of a global sample of Indigenous thinkers, Celidwen and Kelter (2023) build on Tuck and McKenize's (2015) more (to me) essentialized notion of relational validity to center and open this sense of proximity. Relational validity must include an account of the source of the ethical in the ethical relational: kin relationality and (or as) ecological belonging. In addition to Celidwen and Kelter's three points above, I posit, respectfully, that an ecological worldview of belonging reconfigures notions of 'risk' to be more about concern for as many known and potential kin within past, present, and future relational potentialities than restricting care and ethics to presently limited configurations.

Importantly, 'ecological' here does not reduce relationships to a non-sentient biological resource cycle, gene propagation, or hierarchy of what is more or less important within webs of complexity *and how* we might go about re/presenting relationships — it includes an equality of reality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews in that kin belonging is "endorsed

and supported through spiritual pursuits embedded in cultural expressions in oral, embodied, and collective narratives (for example, in languages, storytelling, habits, rituals and rites of passage, songs, or ceremonial dances, law and governance, and lifeways). Most often, these narratives intend to nourish awareness of 'Spirit,' defined here as the animating principle of life weaving all relationships" (p. 3). Recalling notions of animacy and ritual, here is perhaps not a closed gate but a welcoming, if shimmering, wormhole into a concrete and commensurate space of proximity as mutually (across existence as nonlinear) constituting belonging. Wilson (2008) intentionally conflated 'research' with 'ceremony' to materialize the idea that research is the ceremony of maintaining accountability to relationships, an accountability that is at the same time the continual renewal of relationships. The choice to use the word 'ceremony' rather than 'ritual' imports into Wilson's western/ized context — a dissertation undertaken in English at a Canadian university — the relational premise that spirit is real and part of educational praxis. Kinship as ecological belonging via Celidwen and Kelter's put into conversation with my genealogy of kinship here suggests that research as ceremony is still othered against equitable worldview engagement and processual reimagining that includes an accountability to spirit. Rather than a continual limited and de-centering of proximity based on linear notions of relationships, I offer that *inspiriting* of kinship across both material relationships *and* epistemological frames of inquiry as refracted through my (or any) body. My sensorial body includes my mind and the world of relationships constituting me as neither always matter, energy, spirit, imagined, technological, natural, or mechanical — and so on. What resolves — the resolvent — is indeed "the relationality of the relationship" (Ceder, 2018, p. 63) but is not hidden, mystified, or out of reach. It includes the very gesture (however conventionally risky) of reaching towards, which perhaps counters our limitations of cosmological (read literally or metaphorically) distance to materialize closeness as modes of understanding how to *care* for kin and in doing so kins others, broadly included. We might even be able to describe what praxis of "heart" and "love" might actually look like — two word-relatives to 'spirit' that appear in the literature but are always left self-evident.

Spirit as an animating principle and relative inherent to relationality suggest the possibility of tracing spirit "as presence or absence" in our interpretive tools (Chambers, 1999, p. 147) via its ethical contours: being as constituted through relationships, connection to and in proximity, and these relationships as infusing and engendering responsibilities of expanded

kinship in the flesh. The most concrete (if not always describing it) accounting of spirit across contemporary educational research, I suggest and so too I think does curriculum scholar Cynthia Chambers (1999), are expressions of and commitments to 'place.' While I concur that attending to a full ethical relational consideration of 'place' is inextricable from a full relational turn, I must also acknowledge that such discourse typically still works or is made to mystify 'place' as something that requires essentialized experiences to simply feel or otherwise perceive. And so, while I agree that 'place' is the shared context in which we are constituted of relationships and so from where our ethics 'flow' (relational or not so much, cf. Donald, 2016), a fulsome discourse of place must include spirit as part of place. If we consider spirit as the kin that puts us into caring proximity, we must also consider how place cannot be essentialized as one register of existence (e.g., purely physical land) or perceptible only by certain entities (e.g., by virtue of ancestry, broadly construed). As Moodie (2019) argues, I see relational accounting of place as allowing "a learner to open new and previously inaccessible ways of thinking" (p. 735). Once engaged with, "this knowledge is said to be transformative, irreversible, integrative" (p. 736). What might this mean if we considered the ethics of such an opening itself? Are we representing relationality as accessible (or making it accessible) to any human being within any cosmological coordinates?

Relationality as a Latent and Explicit Topography of Educational Methodology

> He has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance— which his growth requires— who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The set qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly. (Thoreau, 1854, pp. 8-9)

Returning to who inspired scholars like Donald to think relationally in ways that they cannot now regress from (D. Donald, personal communication, 11 April 2025), Chambers (2008) further developed a relational understanding of place from a starting point in her Topography (1999) to a core presupposition of a "relational model" (p. 115). Chambers's model deepens place into four dimensions: 1) a different sense of time; 2) holistic enskillment; 3) attentiveness; and 4) a vital kind of wayfinding. To engage in relationality as a curriculum of place requires time — longer than a lifetime. To "know where we are" requires perceptual awareness in relation to

ecologically-situated, intentional, concrete action and attention across a relational network of "intentionality and functionality" that are "immanent in the practice itself" (Chambers, 2008, p. 117). Thus, as Chambers continues, "the knowledge at the heart of a curriculum of place is not 'traditional knowledge as enframed in the discourses of modernity' but 'traditional knowledge as generated in the practices of locality'" (Ingold & Kurttila, cited in Chambers, 2008, p. 117). Critically, however, Chambers (2012) suggests elsewhere that we as non-Indigenous curriculum scholars (and I would add also many Indigenous scholars) are still writing and publishing largely within a settler colonial imaginative and material arrangement that has severed us from place as a nourishing home with interconnected, more-than-human history, reciprocity, and even spirit. For Chambers, it should be the work of curriculum scholars and practitioners to rebuild and make common countenance of a curriculum of place, somehow once again finding our way out of the enframents of our relational lacunae as an even wider settler colonial imaginary.

By re-placializing this imaginary, Donald and several other of my current scholar research participants maintain that relationality may be a way forward in educational praxis, and that this relationality is indeed nourished by real kinship with spirit and spirit world as an agential relative likewise empirically interconnected and interdependent with and not in binary to material space. Despite "critical advances in the field of curriculum studies and the commendable works" of scholars such as Chambers, Donald (2019) charges that, in "curricular terms, place has been displaced by space— a move that effectively encloses human experience and knowing within an Enlightenment-based imagination" (pp. 159, 156). This "deplacialization" stems from the same "colonial frontier logics" that both limit the settler colonial imagination and foreclose good relations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples (Donald, 2011). Important here is the often-missed implication that, even with power and privilege afforded certain bodies and ways of knowing recognized, *we are all Treaty people* (Chambers, 2012) and that whether Indigenous or newcomer, we are all related and responsible to each other and our shared futurities (Chambers & Blood, 2008). These frontier logics are not beyond our reach to behold and hold, or even dismantle, together. We can arguably grasp the settler colonial imagination in the topographies of our curricular lives. Donald in 2009 and 2011 pointed to the colonial fort as the physical and psychical symbolic resource "inscribed on the imagined topography of the mythic West" (2011, pp. 95-96), imbuing the maintenance of our lacunae with threshold and intent. Donald in 2024 (personal communication, 21 December) now

realizes he would write about frontier logics in a very different way today, and has now returned to thinking and teaching through a fuller relational immersion in the coulees of the Edmonton area and other ecologically kindred and kindling spaces in which any student or scholar can "walk themselves into kinship relationality" (2021, p. 61) if they are able to see and feel into the lacunae that are made inscrutable only by their own socially constructed perceptions of relation.

I have therefore chosen to include in this paper implicit and explicit curricular-mythological networks of relationality to add a further stance: that we also still have available to us in educational praxis an onto-epistemological ecology of relationality that we can choose to re-placialize through spirit and a robust multivalent re/presentational project of spirit in our work. As Donald notes, while "we certainly need to demythologize these stories and expose the colonial logics embedded within them, we also urgently need to *remythologize* ourselves [emphasis added]" (2016, p. 15). Implicating educational research as a relational (re)turning means seeing that we have been reaching for a relational paradigm for some time now — but it also means that Chambers's Topography is a nonlinear proposition. I arguably still relate through scholarship as spiritual-epistemological locales as much as I can relate to Donald through citing his work, and the relationality of these locales remains open to re-placialization. Most noticeably absent from the vast expanses of our curriculum studies and broader educational research mythologies are then deeper registers of *kinship*. While Tynan (2021) cautions that kinship "is seldom learnt from academic journal articles", she reminds me, drawing on Aboriginal Australian understandings of land, that it surrounds us (and me, as I write this paper) (p. 597). Relationality is agent and agency in itself that "encompasses everything from ants, memories, humans, fire, tides and research" (p. 597). I have attempted to honour at least the intellectual kinship of relationality across a small cross-section of published research as a broader topography. This creates an important, double inflection point that reminds me to feel for what is missing even in the most explicitly relational stances while feeling prepared to gaze and even touch or feel into these lacunae. Indeed, I am left wondering what curriculum thinking would look like if it were "measured not by resource ownership and control [e.g., through institutional reward structures], but by the number of good relationships we maintain in the complex and diverse life-systems of this blue green planet" (Wildcat, 2013, p. 515). Relational (re)turning thus implicates a vast, missing contour from our research and teaching topography — a means to

placialize and make kindred the physical cognitive repertoires through which we mostly still relate.

As I have felt and scholars like Donald (personal communication, 27 February 2025) have acknowledged, learning and knowing from a ‘place’ that connects one to deep ancestral knowledge is a privilege increasingly rare to many humans. For me, as I have experienced it, ‘place’ can be concrete and sensual/orial but is not set in stone. Place being inextricable from spirit, I suggest that then a multivalent relationship with place may contribute to an open/ing discussion of spirit and vice-versa ‘place.’ I have for over 20 years been taught (across my academic career) to keep my own sense of kinship with spirit private; here I offer it as a glimpse into a lacuna I have never felt safe or respected in sharing, being accused of “white fragility” when suggesting I have spirit and kinship with our shared kin, when ascribing negative valence to fragility is such a deeply harmful and settler colonial suggestion that is ultimately damaging and remarginalizing to all folks.

I would overwhelm this essay if I were to provide a full accounting of my sense of place, or even just the place study I have conducted since moving to the lands from which I write: typically acknowledged as the ‘traditional and unceded territories’ of the Algonquin Peoples, I have come to know Ottawa more as the lands that have traditionally cared for and been cared for by the Algonquin Peoples. I make this distinction because I was raised without a strong sense of place as fixed or owned property. I am the first generation and last surviving offspring of a displaced person — my Polish/Austrian/Sorbian mother was born in a refugee camp and granted no birth nationality, after both sides of her family were obliterated by World War II. My father and his family, mutually hateful Irish Catholic and Welsh Protestant famine-fleeing settlers, rejected me as unfavourably miscegnated. I was not raised but rather *grew up* despite abuse. I was cast out of my family home into homeless orphanhood because I am queer. I have struggled throughout my life to ‘mask’ my neurodivergence and multiple disabilities. Even here on these traditionally relational lands, I am othered the more I disclose who I am and ‘where’ I come from.

Yet, I have a sense of place — as inspirited. I can move psychically through the only nourishing moments of my childhood, experienced across the ecologies of Northern Ontario — never in the same place and so always feeling out new relationships with a new place as animate. When delinquent from K-12 schooling and avoiding abuse, which was my norm, I wandered

between Toronto's Humber and Don rivers and along the shores of Lake Ontario, feeling through society and biology as entangled. I learned difficult lessons about myself as a queer person through imbricating trauma, as well as ways of loving a person, place, or otherwise that do not require shameful measurement against the heteropatriarchal structures towering over me. I can call in and feel spirit into places inhospitable, some physical and some virtual, offering and feeling it as place. I look at any 'thing' as worthy of my consideration for care — for love. Yet, I feel I can hear the academic critique of my own being as observably displaced and so denied of kinship: "What about place?"

As I conclude this paper, I feel like I am methodologically stretched between becoming a fragile but ecologically situated relative and denied kinship because I have not sufficiently represented my relationality. I am not unlike an ecological entity akin to the 'native' orchids I find in the local bog ecosystem of Mer Bleue, and an institutionally-garroted bog person subsumed into the peatmoss (which I know and love as the relative of the orchid) like my distant Iron Age Celtic ancestors, cast into deformed onto-epistemological mummification after ritualized discursive trauma and execution for crimes against authentic relational experience. But, as Métis scholar Jennifer Markides (2023) reminds me, "If you think about the tiny imperceptible threads that extend out from us to the more-than-human world, you feel the boundaries of self blur and stretch. […] Some threads may be thicker as the relational bonds feel stronger, some are whisps, almost subconscious in the attachment and other feel like ropes that pull at your attention to them, depending on your relationships" (p. 2). As Markides suggests, such threads — if perceptible — can be both fragile and powerfully integral: "If the fine threads [of relation] were visible to the human eye, we could see each other in our various degrees of connection to the world. There would be those with the fewest threads walking around with the most impoverished spirits, living precariously amongst us" (p. 3). Others, Markides suggests, would become scintillating nexuses of relational threads radiating from their bodies. Markides (personal communication, 23 June 2023) practices what she calls "noticing" whenever she finds herself in a new place: noticing all the relatives, some familiar and some new, and how they might all be connected, including to her. Doing so, as Markides and I have discussed, extends or makes conscious and palpable a sense of ecological kinship and so *care for* such kin extrinsic to their human use-value. Some of my research participants have recently expressed that they now daily grapple with how they might acknowledge their spirit and connection to spirit in their

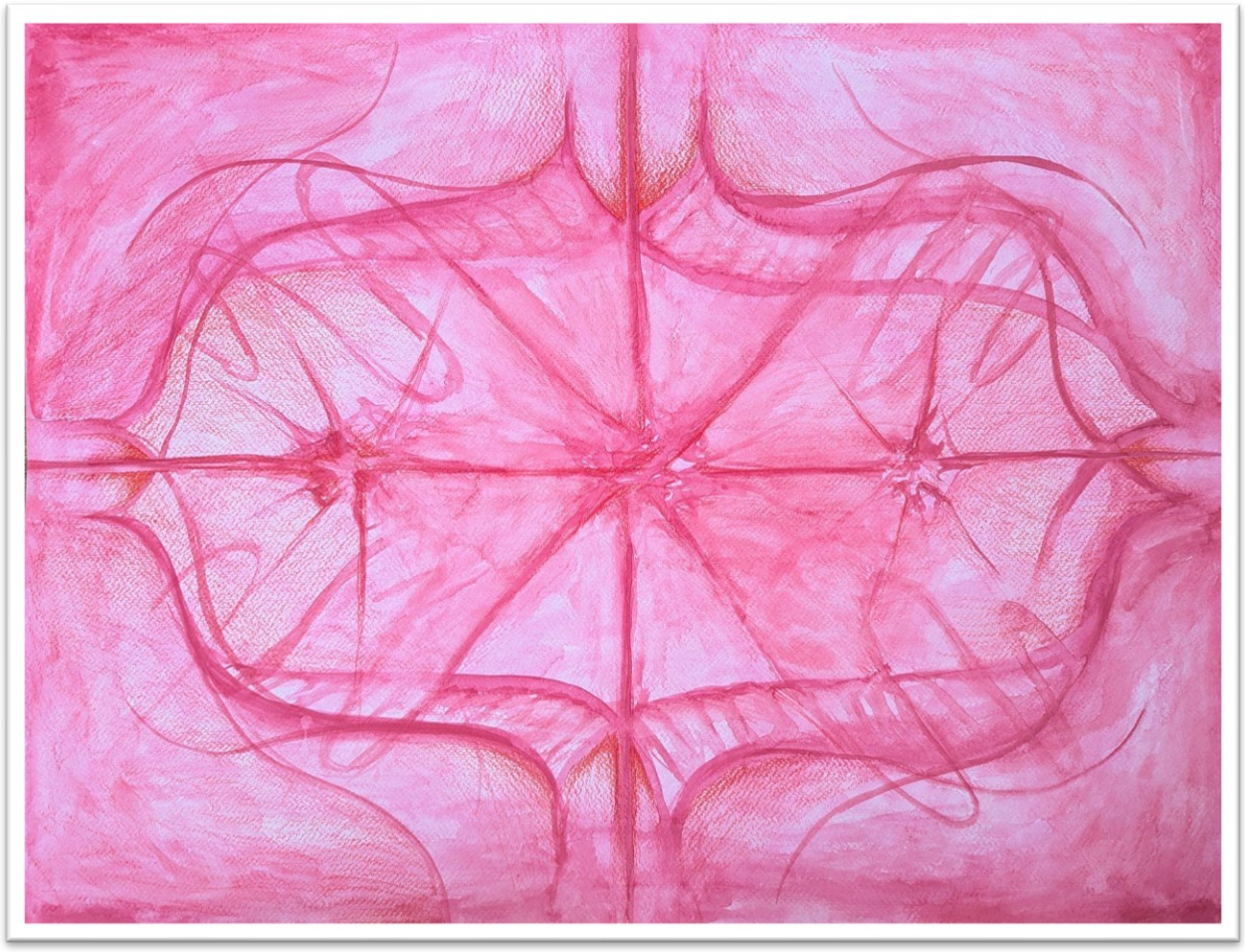
teaching, worrying that they do not know how to reach a student teacher who seems unable to see their own relationality, their own capacity for spirit (L. Howell, personal communication, 14 February, 2025). As I have come to feel spirit in my own life and work, I offer that we inspirit ourselves and become such relationally aware beings through such careful perceptual work. Researching and teaching how to care is thus a keenly pressing concern; I find that my teaching is increasingly about relating how I care — sometimes as alien, like affection for insects, plants, minerals, ice formations, as it might seem to the typical teacher student taught to keep any non-human entities external to the ethical considerations of their daily lives. I am still working through the representational flux of my own place study and so how to share it across educational praxis without breaking its spirit.

And so of course I am fragile: I cannot be otherwise, as a human, constituted of intergenerational trauma and random genetic numbers in a colonized lottery I did not myself enter, but with a heart and spirit that wants to (and does) find and feel kinship with others. All life and spirit is fragile because all life and spirit, if acknowledged as related and interdependent, must share all vulnerabilities across a cosmos of fragile but vital threads of relation. And I feel related; I feel an incandescent compassion and urgent love for all of my relatives. I sincerely love insects, rocks, trees, and the storm clouds that blanket us in winter. This is exceedingly relevant for any educational research in the present moment: for "those who do not see or feel those bonds or responsibilities, there is little understanding or empathy." Like Markides (2023), I believe that shifting to a kinship worldview in research and education "is likely the only way we will be able to prevent the complete destruction of the Earth" (p. 3), including ourselves. But such love and care are not part of our research or teaching ethics, and perhaps makes us vulnerable to mutual devaluation across neoliberal society. 'Fragility' here is likewise necessarily relative, or a relative, we may need to know better. And so here I can address both the possibility that I 'know' my relations through a capacity to love them, and that this includes and constitutes love of spirit or spirit as love for kin I might not necessarily be able to see or otherwise quantify. Spirit or including perception of spirit as agential in complex biosocial relationships suggests contours beyond western/ized deep ecology or biophilia — as care or love based on recognized human benefit or human-ascribed beauty (cf. Muir, 2011; Adedeji, 2023; Parsons, 2024). I would further offer that it inspirits emerging discussions that increasingly suggest metaphysical perspectives are needed across disciplines from physics and biology to

information science, implicating consciousness as an extra-dimensional universal property shared by and connecting all matter (e.g., McMillan, 2024) or even the possibility of a "spirit particle" that communicates consciousness across existence (Youvan, 2024). Expressing such contours as further ethically charged may realize that even our most hegemonic languages are always-already changeable, and our engagements across all possible places can bring us into new futurities of perception of and care for the more-than-human world — and by virtue each other as mutually inspirited/ing. We might remember that human knowledge is always ecologically kinning between ourselves and the more-than-human through our attempts at representing our thinking-knowing-being in a shared cosmos co-constituting by and of our enfleshed senses (Abram, 1994). My methodological contribution here is not a call to return to religion but to reframe what spirit could be outside theist/atheist binaries yet also re-centre cosmic responsibility rather than anthropocentric questions of purpose (cf. Goff, 2023). My own spirit and my particular relational perceptual abilities or knowings can be shared, and this sharing can include its ethical contours — ways of aesthetically engaging with and expanding care of others and their futurities otherwise not readily imagined as kinned in education (Phillips, 2021b). Rather than invoking risk as a westernized relational model might imply, such a methodology suggests, at least in my present relational contexts, the empowering of conversations and practices (including pedagogies) that truly risk challenging the unsustainable status quo.

Figure 21

Relational Lacunae by Jordyn Hendricks, 2024



Note. Figure 21 is a photograph of a physical piece, pencil and watercolour on watercolour paper, approx. 90x40cm, Jordyn Hendricks, 2024 (title derivative of Patrick Phillips's work).

In my presently unfurling relational web of meaning-making with Two-Spirit Métis artist Jordyn Hendricks, who identifies in kinship with the St. Laurent and The Pas communities of Red River Métis, I believe that we are beginning to materialize a fuller relational accounting of relationality in ways that welcome as many relatives into view as we can together perceive. As we engaged in what I call our 'winter work,' we collaborated through text, speech, and arts-based exchange to think, feel, and see through the relational lacunae of relationality. In Jordyn's conceptual materialization of our methodological collaborations tracing relational lacunae (Fig. 21), I suggest that we can, in effect, see that our lacunae are possibly made up by our own ability or disability in seeing (or feeling) the relational threads that inter-connect us and through which

we are co-constituted. Tentatively, these threads could include our care for each other via spirit, and so care for spirit as existent. I offer that my methodology as manifested here offers that we might use the sensorial of our embodied spirits to overcome relational disability in the academy and wider settler lifeworlds. I understand disability via radical and relational disability studies here to include four movements of intersubjectivity: 1) disabilities are real and profoundly existentially limiting to the disabled entity, but that 2) the entity's being is disabled not because they are inherently flawed or malformed, but because the network of relationships in which they are constituted, enmeshed, or bound denies a full ecological kinship with their body and spirit as inseparable. This supposition leads to the third intersubjective enfleshment: 3) the disabled entity, as a necessary extension of us as kin experiencing variably relational dis/ability, are experiencing a perceptual or knowledge-knowing developmental need. And so, 4) that entity, as we all are, is a student in need of an inspiriting praxis inclusive of all our ecological kin. It is therefore our responsibility to work towards understanding how we might do so. Along the way, I imagine, we might perceive that "All the boundaries" — between us, our spirits, and spirit as our connection to and with other spirits and kin — "are as absolute or arbitrary as we imagine them to be" (Markides, 2023, p. 3).

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Chapter 4

Relearning Data in Education: An Arts-based Inspiriting of Truth and Reconciliation Teacher Education

> If things were different and I was braver, or it wasn't a global pandemic, or my children were older and not being homeschooled in moments borrowed from the endless videoconferences required by my full-time job, I would insist on the validity of Indigenous ways of knowing and push to have a piece of my beadwork steeped in law accepted by the Faculty for what it truly is — an extra-intellectual expression of Indigenous Legal Knowledge and worthy to fulfill the requirements of a PhD in Law. Instead, I am capitulating to the pressure of the academy.
> (Lussier, 2021, p. 34)

> You dream of one day throwing out the database and starting again with the one that will get it all right … But you know that you have to maintain this one in the future.
> — Jacob Harris, database scientist/designer
> (as quoted in Thorp, 2021, p. 130)

Introduction: Remembering Data

I am not Indigenous to the place from which I presently write: the lands, waters, foodways, traditions, literatures and, critically, spirit worlds of the *places* caring of and cared for by the Algonquin Nations. I am, however, arguably a human, particularly one indigenous to the *spaces* of academia and typical, hegemonic knowledge production — its discourses, hierarchies, and worldviews constraining of what counts as its knowledges, its representation, and so what becomes worth teaching. As my doctoral project took on the topic and implications of a relationally complex bio-, social-, and spiritual construct that is described, defined, and enacted across the places and spaces of Indigenous knowledges and typically western education, I feel that my subjectivity as a scholar and educator, indeed perhaps my humanity and spirit, has become blurred and stretched across spaces and places that are typically described as incommensurate. I have journeyed across my doctoral work the places and spaces in which Truth and Reconciliation teacher education, what I (Phillips, 2021a) earlier identified as an emerging field coalescing in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and its Final Report and Calls to Action (TRC, 2015), is presently negotiated. Along the (non-linear) way, I have become necessarily entangled in, and perhaps transformed by, the data emergent of

my studies. Throughout a sustained 4-year literature review of Truth and Reconciliation education discourse and practice, I (Phillips, 2024) found it necessary to enact a unique intersubjective literature review approach inspired by the relational implications of the literature and its practitioners themselves. My data, or rather the data given to me to be cared for, called me into attending the methodological implications of relationality — particularly that of a largely unrepresented but ostensibly critical register of TRC education: spirit. My project, in response, transformed into a methodological project of carefully considering the differences but also commensurability between Indigenous and western notions of relationality, particularly how spirit — infusing of and extending the care of kinship across relationships — might be the necessary solvent and resolvent between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews in de/colonizing research and education (Phillips, 2025a). Inspiriting Truth and Reconciliation education for me became a non-disciplinary (open to all epistemologies and ontologies) and aesthetico-political (concerned with the materialization or re/presentation of what is cared about) project, the preliminary findings of which I discuss in this manuscript as a simultaneous sharing of my project's particular arts-based methods and projected future dissemination as a unique, tangible teacher education resource and so a foundation for inspirited pedagogies of truth and redress.

I find myself continually motivated by a sincere wondering of what it might mean and look like to truly research and teach around complexly relational topics such as Truth and Reconciliation, and believe there is great and humanizing hope for de/colonial, anti-oppressive, or any project constituted of a relational and transformative ethos to be found and felt by anyone willing to engage in an inspirited relationality. The possibility of including spirit, or what it might mean, within our educational discourses and practices suggests to me an opportunity to together reimagine what we mean by data, education, teaching, teachers, and so the imaginative and material arrangements writ large. What is at stake, I believe, is not only the health and sustainability of our relationships between us as human communities, but also our (as westernized human beings) inextricable and presently impoverished relationships with the more-than-human world that sustains us. Our biological and social spheres are in danger of extinguishing shattering because of our continual denial of relationships, including and critically, I posit, our relationships to, with, and of spirit. While spirit is presently either taboo or typically and only occasionally mentioned as a private (i.e., individual 'spiritual') experience (of either

highly relativistic, codified, or otherwise extracurricular 'spirituality') across contemporary educational literature, it nevertheless surrounds us — if we are to take seriously and respectfully what Indigenous Peoples have been sharing with the academy for some time now. While I will shortly trace the rest of this manuscript and so the necessary contexts of my doctoral project findings, I presently want to invite my reader into a story about what data might mean, and how data and its representation as being inspirited is not necessarily such an abstract idea and its archives renewable and tangible. Bear with me while I return us to some of the places and spaces of humanity's inspirited knowledge, and so inspirited representations of data.

I have never been to my ancestral homelands in Ireland, Wales, Central and Eastern Europe and so have never visited, as I discuss later, what some European scholars now understand as the potentially earliest European sites of sacred learning from deep time, for example: the cave paintings and petroglyphs of the Cave of El Castillo in Spain (ca. 40,000 BCE); the figurative paintings of the Chauvet Cave in France (ca. 35,000 BCE); the red pigmented engravings found in the Cathole Cave on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales (ca. 15,000 BCE).

My earliest exposure to Indigenous culture in what some of us now call Canada was nevertheless kindred art — specifically in the Petroglyphs Provincial Park in Ontario, which contains the largest known concentration of pre-contact Indigenous rock art in Canada. When I would visit as a child, there was no surrounding structure or interpretive centre — just a wooden boardwalk around the main marble outcropping containing over a thousand images comprising a wide variety of realistic animal and human forms, as well as abstract and symbolic representations, all surrounded by boreal forest. While official provincial and federal websites describe the park in terms of its empirical qualities — hectares and known dates of human activity — they and the extant plaques on the land also hint at more: that these visualizations "give evidence of the spiritual and intellectual life" of the Peoples who carved them (Parks Canada, n.d.). Now over 30 years after I first encountered these representations, there is a glass structure enclosing the main site and an attached Learning Centre administered by the Curve Lake First Nation. Community Anishinaabemowin Coordinator Anne Taylor (2019) shares that the glyph site is known more intimately in Anishinaabemowin as *Kinomaage Waapkong* or 'The Teaching Rocks.' As Taylor relates her Nation's oral histories from pre-Columbian times:

> Our families would paddle here. The men would fold back the moss and detritus that protected the carvings. They would talk about the teachings. The women would copy the images into their craftworks. Our children would play quietly and respectfully, listening to the stories and the gentle voices of grandparents, aunties, uncles, mothers, fathers. The site would then be covered back up, cleverly disguised as forest floor until the next time our Ancestors needed to remind us of who we are. (para. 1)

Although it is no longer possible to get close enough to hear, "deep crevices in the surface are thought to lead to the spirit world and an underground trickle of water is interpreted as a place where the spirit speaks" (McIntyre, 2010, p. 18). The glyphs are thus inseparable from the place where they are found, and all its animate relationships. This is what makes it sacred, of spirit. Through oral history, ceremony, and human experience, the glyphs "tell of our relationship with the land, water and the beings with whom we share space … [helping] us to build that strong foundation needed to live life in a good way" (Taylor, 2019, para. 8). This knowledge is alive and inspirited — but it is also inspiriting of those who spend time with it, including its representation/materialization in place.

I remember reading interpretive plaques built into the boardwalk surrounding the Rocks when I visited as a child in the early to mid-1990s. I remember the story of the Anishinaabe Peoples relationship to the rocks as being rendered in past-tense. While this past-tense framing of Indigenous Peoples was maintained through my K-12 education, I nevertheless remember understanding as a child that the Rocks were important. My mother, a displaced person and refugee who instilled a wariness of an easy national identity, related to me that the Rocks were sacred and worth protecting. As a teacher, she wanted me to see them as more than strange symbols on an inert rock. While she thought, by virtue of her own K-12 schooling, that the specificity of their meanings was lost to prehistory, she did relate to me an understanding that the surrounding forests and other ecosystems were in relation to deeply caring human societies before the one we now call Canada. As my visits to the Rocks coincided with the trips 'up north,' to the lands of Northern Ontario where my mother grew up, and because these trips have been my most cherished memories of learning across an otherwise traumatizing childhood and included my introduction to art and my many ecological relatives, I have always felt that Turtle Island has been inspirited, even if I might not know the languages of its first inspiriting. My

work (knowledge production and teaching) has always felt like a practice of inspiriting care into knowledge and representation, although through different modes and languages.

I am not a Anishinaabemowin speaker — the first language of the lands from which I presently write. An Anishinaabemowin speaker would have access to a deep and agile repertoire of what are called by linguists animate verbs, with complex variation depending on the animacy of what or who is in conversation. I am, however, yet human — and my memories of the Teaching Rocks have remained alive in my mind, and I have frequently returned to them and changed in subjectivity with their memory as I have worked across my graduate studies now spanning over 10 years; I even wonder if my (privately) cherished visits to the Rocks might have inspired my earlier studio art career. In many if not all the first languages of Turtle Island (North America), animacy denotes degrees of sentience: agency and personhood (as best as can be translated into English). Unlike the dominant languages of globalized commerce and the academic knowledge production imbedded in its commodifying flows, animacy in these first languages is not attributed (as it is in English via pronouns) solely to specific nouns/things or inferred by a limited selection of anthropocentric verbs; all things, physical or otherwise, can be animate — including the relationships between them. Most critical to my discussion here is the reality and futurity that such linguistic affordances (of languages like Anishinaabemowin) make possible: that all things have, are in relation to, and are put into relation via *spirit*. Spirit in this sense is non-religious — always-already partially knowable and mysterious but diverse, accessible and part of all that surrounds us, including flesh, words, stone, and ink on a page. Because spirit includes senses of belonging and responsibility to each other and to all that has spirit, attending to this dimensional (of) being extends ethics and *care* across distances (real or imagined) modern, westernized frameworks of belonging typically habituate us (Phillips, 2025a). Further, because existence is infused by and infusing of spirit, all thinking-knowing-being includes a spiritual valence to it, whether we choose to acknowledge it in our praxis. From what I can grasp through a critical sociocultural applied linguistics lens that neither hierarchizes nor essentializes (and so does not make mutually alien) worldviews through language (Pavlenko, 2014), spirit here does not mean something separate from biological, geological, cosmological, etc. processes. All life has spirit and would not be alive without spirit, and so anything constituted of spirit is alive.

Ergo, data, in word, sound, or image, includes spirit. Attending to the full relational implication of our data, including its spirit and spirit as data, might not just be the "the animating principle of life weaving all relationships" (Celidwen & Keltner, 2024, p. 3), but an affordance of understanding integral to any relational project, such as Truth and Reconciliation, and realizing its transformative ethos of decolonial, shared futurities (Phillips, 2025a). Excluding spirit from our praxis further suggests consequences increasingly dire for our bio-spirit-social sphere, as spirit may very well be through which we extend our sense of care and responsibility beyond human kinship to include land, water, sky, animal, plant, geology, meteorology, cosmology and all of our relatives as animate and worthy of our respect and love (Phillips, 2025a).

What if we were to then consider what research might look like before and after notions of races, nation states, empires, and global extractive networks of commodification? As an artist and arts-based educational researcher, my mind goes to our — as a human species — earliest known mark-making and its entanglements with human lifeways and perception, however many of these practices are ostensibly lost to (paleo)geologic history. Although not presently an interest of arts-based or educational researchers, paleolithic cave paintings have been studied using a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including visual psychology, multivariate statistics, and experimental design. These approaches take the visual as a social and biological phenomenon towards understanding the meaning and function of cave art for those who created it, and so how early expressions of human experience might relate to us early human cognition and behavior. Intxaurbe et al. (2024) argue that ~12,000- to 20,000-year-old European cave artworks demonstrate the existence of multifunctional graphic communication systems that were likely embedded not only into the rock but also into early social meaning-making, including education. Theoretical cognitive archaeologist Capín (2025) proposes that early hominids, including early humans, used cave art as a means of seeing, feeling, and making sense of themselves in relation to their environment, creating not simply records of their existence but highly multimodal mediations between somatic, emotional, and abstract thinking experience. In doing so, early humans perhaps taught themselves, through re/presentation of animals, figures, indexical markings such as handprints, and abstract symbols, how to integrate universal mammalian emotions such as fear, joy and curiosity, the sensorial expanse of their environment, and their sense of self, other, time, and community within a holistic world constituted of complex

relationships. Critically, in such a worldview, the affordances of such relational representation may have allowed us as human beings to more fully appreciate ourselves in relation to place.

I have written elsewhere (e.g., Phillips, 2024, 2025a) about my wanderings across space, place, and time, and how I have been dwelling between a sense of place and placeness as a non-Indigenous person on land quite close to the Teaching Rocks. I have related my experiences with Indigenous Knowledge graduate courses, beadweaving and community reading circles, and my attempt to read scholarship, often by Indigenous authors, in ways that open myself up to intersubjective transformation and change of knowing-being-doing outside of text on a page and beyond the contractual limitations of being a scholar, educator or Canadian more broadly — all towards being a better human being, or relative, on these lands but also our wider bio-spiritual sphere. However, I realize that I have let some onto-epistemological detritus obscure my own enduring experiences and sense of spirit with place. Rather than moss, lichen, or fallen leaves, this detritus has been epistemological sludge, very much the poison of colonialism as experienced in academia and broader lifeways, by most peoples on Turtle Island, regardless of indigeneity. Some of this toxin, as I have explored elsewhere, is constituted of our (as non-Indigenous to Turtle Island) onto-epistemological moves to disqualify ourselves from relationships as kin. As I attend to the institutional requirements of my dissertation by putting my being and thinking into text, I thus want to include consideration of how there may yet be a dismissal of texts as places in themselves. If we (perhaps easily) imagine that the teachings of cave paintings and petroglyphs travelled within the minds and communities of learners as places and so remained alive across time, space, and place, I suggest once more that our academic touchstones might be able to engender similar sites of relational learning, if we imagine them as sites of knowledge given and our learning as including responsibilities to these gifts.

I hope to relate data as animate gifts to which we are beholden to as relatives: to respect, honour, and keep alive their spirit across their reception, interpretation, and re/presentation. I therefore offer the beginning of not only unlearning colonial limitations of representation (including a broad sense of what language could mean) but also relearning a shared responsibility of data predating our fortified colonial conventions of research and teaching. Even a brief relational etymological pilgrimage offers some insight into how data might be remembered as kin.

The original (in the Latin) sense of the word ‘data’ was precisely ‘something given.’ The word ‘research’ stems from the Middle French "recherche", which means "to go about seeking." The earliest known use of the word ‘research’ was in fact at the initial thrust of European colonial exploration, circa 1577. While scholars of the history of science date the scientific method — or quantitative research — back to ancient and sovereign kingdoms and peoples such as those of Egypt, Babylon, and the pre-colonial Americas, it seems that qualitative research emerges, according to the academic record, at points of colonial violence: Alexander the Great is credited with conducting rudimentary ethnography as he conquered territories across Europe and Eurasia, and Roman gentry, including Julius Caesar, later conducted carefully codified observational studies of the lands they explored and later brutalized into submission, layering in qualitative accounts of the peoples, places, traditions, beliefs, and other ways of knowing and being within their reports to Rome (Bodson, 1991; Bell, 1993). While it might seem a strange temporal stretch to open such a deep cut into etymology and histories of human inquiry, given the relational implications of my research I believe it to be critical: there is something arguably still ethically dissonant at the heart of contemporary qualitative research inquiry, even on topics intersecting with truth and reconciliation education and its attending implications, in the sense(s) that we are taught and teach our students to, as I would phrase it, ‘go about seeking something given.’ Seeking something given, as I phrase it, suggests that we are looking for gifts to acquire and make use of rather than being open to receiving knowledge that might require our responsibility to that data or its constituting relationships.

We might remember, then, that colonization has been a human behaviour predating the takeover of Turtle Island, and research, even the ostensibly most relational modes, has been used to colonize land, peoples, and minds. Alexander and Caesar both used qualitative research to extract knowledge from peoples and places in order to assimilate the same peoples and places. Indeed, early settler colonizers of Turtle Island conducted qualitative research towards extracting and later weaponizing concepts like relationality against the lands and peoples they supposedly learned from (Martin, 2023). Such colonial understanding of data, as something extracted, mastered, and used, voids data of its relational, ethical implications: we *capture, take,* and then *analyze* (dissect) data as object. If we as educational researchers continue to go about researching and relating to data as something we are given by virtue of our exploration, we run the risk of once again extracting knowledge and re-enfolding it into what is now a globally toxic hegemonic

way of life that will not change in response. Even those researchers seeking a relational research approach will mistreat data in this way if they do not remember data as ethically charged — beyond the ways in which a typical university ethics board would consider. As I have suggested elsewhere (Phillips, 2024, 2025a), many scholars invoke concepts like relationality without fully attending to what they might mean. Along the way, they largely denude such knowledge of the relationality of their data, now acquired and owned, yet profess to be representing relational work. We deny data as something given — as having value because of its giving and reception — and so all our attending ethical and relational responsibilities to *care* for data.

Across the following pages, I report on the methods development of my dissertation research from across the past 4 years, sharing how my thinking about data has changed, how my methodologies and learnings from my literature and research participants have entangled in relation to myself as a researcher, artist, educator, and human being, and how I have attempted to realize a response to the primary questions of my doctoral thesis:

- What would a relational data paradigm look like for curriculum studies and teacher education?
- How can we work towards honouring place, kinship, and spirit through academic production and citational modes?
- How can knowledge production and dissemination be unsettling / decolonizing within our status quo modes of academic engagement?
- In what ways might truth and reconciliation teacher education as an emerging field be represented in ways that do not reduce its relational complexity?

As I proposed many moons ago, I have always envisioned my response to these questions as not only a written thesis manuscript(s) but also an alternative dissemination platform that does not reduce the relational implications/meaning of the data. Across writing and beyond the written word, I understand my work to be arts-based materializations of attempts at honouring the relational spirit of my data — a complex, unsetting but also inspiriting knowledge production and sharing that does not exclude the relationality of the data given. I therefore share my initial work to make this a (or in) reality.

In my next sections, I first discuss notions as data from which I began at the beginning of my dissertation work, towards articulating limitations in research methods that attempt to represent data more fully and relationally. I then share my attempts at exceeding these limitations

through arts-based methods. I end with the current arts-based materializations of my data and thus my research findings, as collaboratively conceptualized and visualized with Two-Spirit Métis artist Jordyn Hendricks. I conclude with the possibilities for the wider materialization of my and my participants' data as being in relation to spirit.

Notions of the Archive: Big and Small Data, Digital Humanities, and Data as Aesthetico-Political

In the early days of my PhD in 2020-21 and during pandemic lockdown, I led a distributed research subcluster at uOttawa, as part of the larger Thinking Historically for Canada's Future (THFCF) teacher education cluster. As the project lead, I had to not only manage a large project and several research assistants, but also develop protocols and methods for a novel (for qualitative researchers) task: a large-scale literature review of Canadian teacher education responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, looking back to 2010 and up to the present (then 2020). This meant thinking of methods that would allow me and my team to make sense of a high volume of qualitative data.

As the lead researcher with an arts-based background, I considered how this might be a problem that entangled a volume of data with its representation — i.e., how it could be read. This led me into the realm of *digital humanities*. Much like curriculum studies' origins and reconceptualization, digital humanities began with the meeting of the programmatic life of emerging digital technologies and humanistic inquiry, but is now undergoing its own reconceptualization to include questions of power and justice. Currently the nexus in which traditionally qualitative, small-data fields meet and even intervene on the modes and methods of data and computer science, digital humanities began when literature, language, and then history and art scholars began applying new technologies towards their inquiry while reflecting on how these modes and methods affected what questions and meanings emerged. Lane (2016) notes that such a shift has reconceptualized data in such scholarship as spatial — creating spaces and entry points for considering how humanistic data and its interpretation could be thought of and carried out as onto-epistemological experiments. Lane suggests a laboratory metaphor to bridge the two dominant strains of digital humanities in practice, one privileging the 'thingness' of the technical and the other appreciative of the 'thinking through' of the technical as technique. Examples of digital humanities work, then, reflect a user's definition, and, like curriculum studies, digital humanities resists a fixed program. While some constrain what counts as digital humanities to

work that explicitly leverages computational technologies towards humanistic questions, such as computer-aided analysis of literary texts, others look to the digital as also an epistemological technology.

As a curriculum studies-informed arts-based educational researcher at heart, I pursued digital humanities perspectives and methods while undertaking this project and beyond, eventually allowing this work to inspire my dissertation project.

Initially, my work on the THFCF project(s) was pragmatic: exploring how existing digital humanities methods might support a deep but broad critical analysis of a large corpus. In kind, I started by considering the possibilities and limitations of typical qualitative decomposition of texts and the software and tools that might be leveraged to facilitate the perception of patterns, forms, and relationships across a large set of texts and human-conducted close readings and decompositions. I will spare my reader the full report on this project (Phillips, 2021a). Salient to my paper here is that once I began to read the literature while experimenting with visualization techniques practically alongside theories of digital humanities and my arts background, I began to consider a far more expansive idea of data and its materialization than is typical of present digital humanities methods.

As demonstrated in Figures 22 and 23, I began with relatively simple graphing.

Figure 22

Voyant Hybrid Trendline-Area Chart Visualization of THFCF Key Themes Across Pre-TRC Article Decompositions

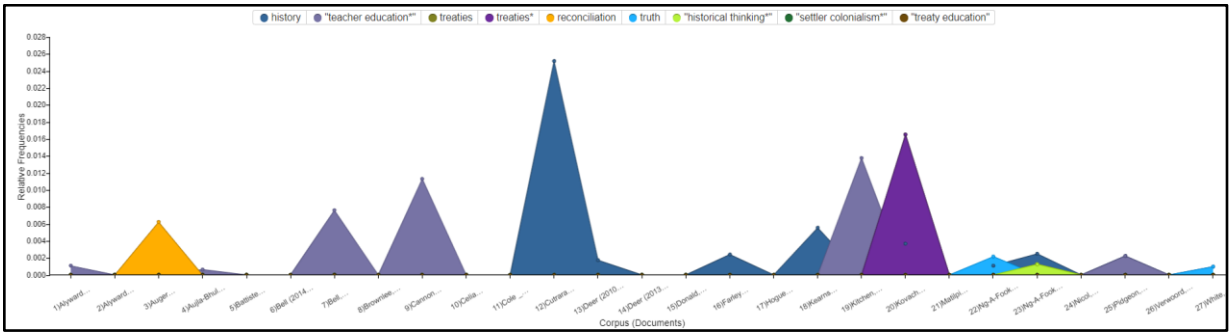
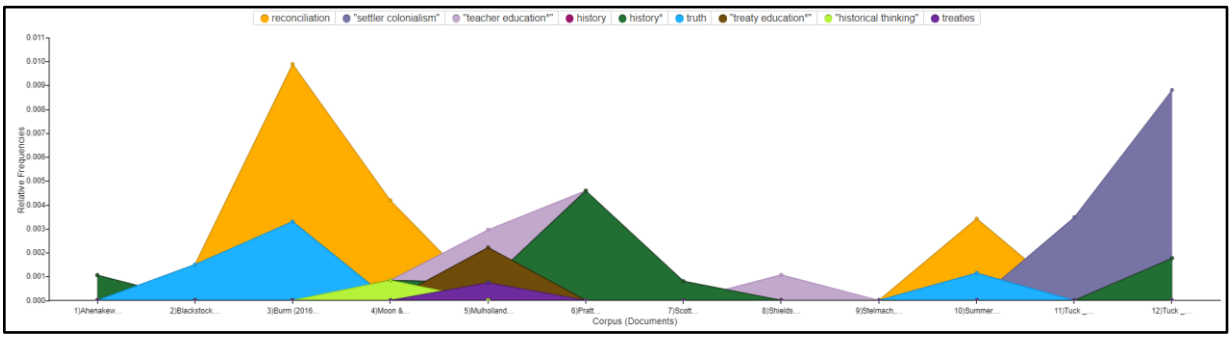


Figure 23

Voyant Hybrid Trendline-Area Chart Visualization of THFCF Key Themes Across Post-TRC Article Decompositions

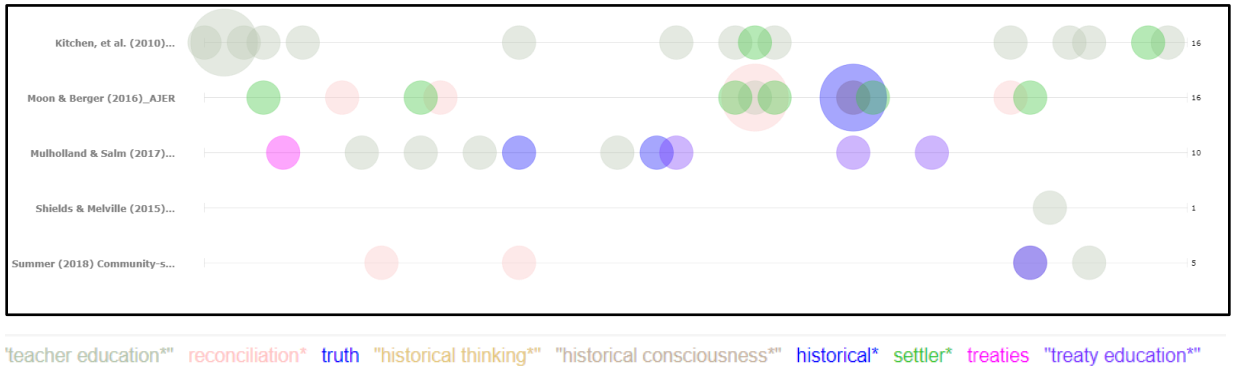


Note. The purpose of this graph was to illustrate the lack of significant change in historical thinking discussions, epistemological emergence of settler colonialism as a term; and increase in collocation and interconnection between key concepts emergent of the TRC. As an area chart, this began to suggest a kind of topography of data.

These figures demonstrate my early experimentation beyond typical data visualizations like bar charts. Here, I began experimenting with a freeware digital humanities suite of tools known as Voyant. Voyant was designed to allow visual exploration of text files, individually and as collections, or corpi, of texts as data sets. Like traditional digital humanities, these tools rely on quantifying texts via representing word frequency and other patterns; more advanced are Voyant's abilities to represent collocations and potential relationships (or lack of relationships) between terms/words and plot these in different spatial arrangements, such as timelines. Figures 24 and 25 demonstrate similar but divergent possibilities; Figure 24 shows where key concepts appear, overlap, or do not overlap/coincide across selected journal articles of a specific journal. Figure 25 shows a high-level trend line across all decompositions by THFCF team members, towards an attempt at visualizing a holistic view of how different key concepts of the study appear across various dimensions of the literature, effectively offering a topography of the literature.

Figure 24

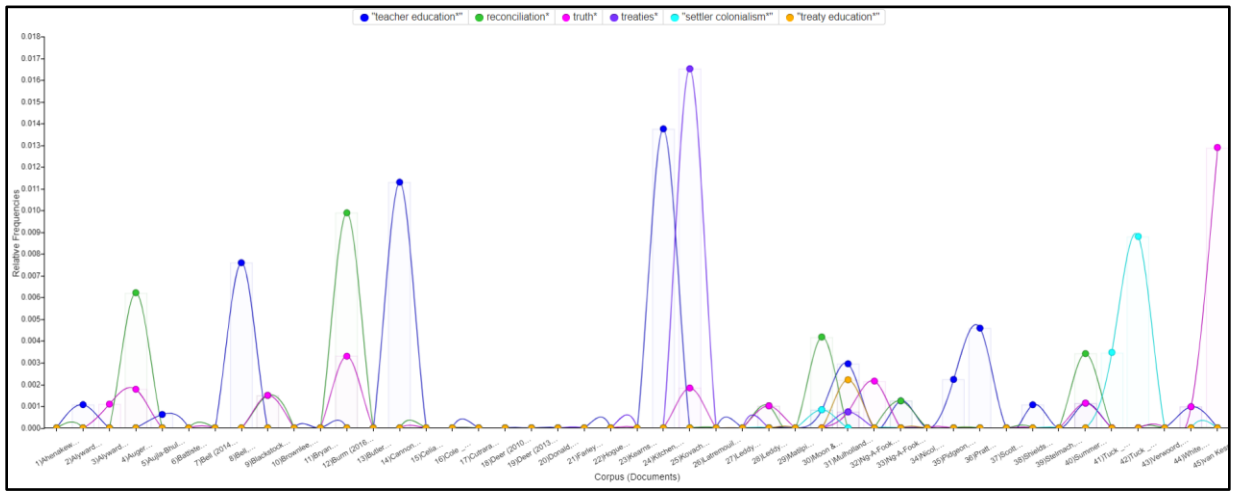
Key Concepts Appear, Overlap, or do not Overlap/coincide Across Selected Articles of a Specific Journal



Note. Voyant Bubbleline visualization of qualitative decomposition of 5 representative Alberta Journal of Educational Research articles, comparing disassociation and/or collocation of different main themes.

Figure 25

A High-level Trend Line Across all Decompositions by Team Members



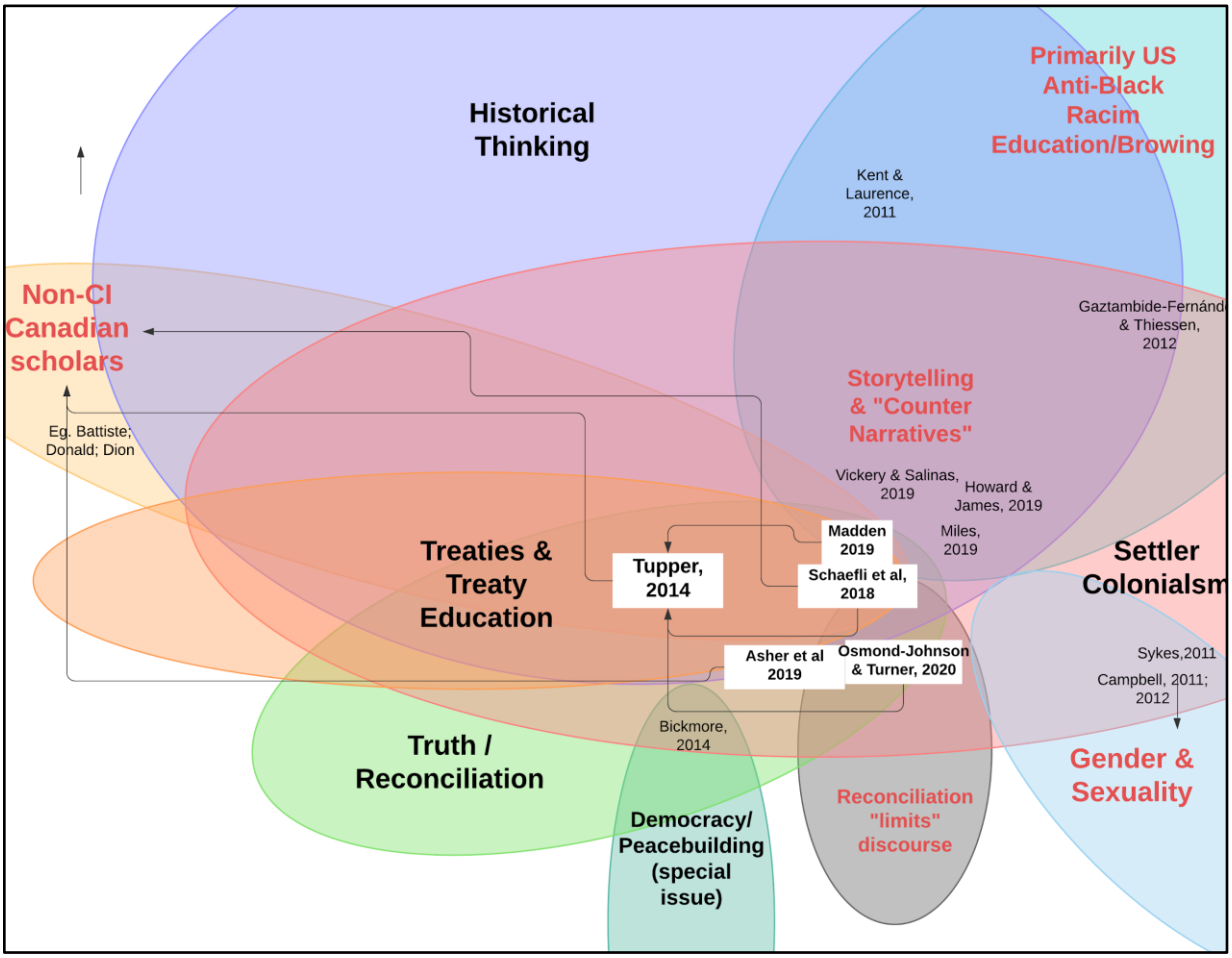
*Note***.** Voyant Trendline visualization comparing frequency, volume, and collocation of our key terms across all journal decompositions (approx. 50 decompositions).

As I pursued digital humanities perspectives and these methods experiments further beyond the THFCF project while also reading the literature of truth and reconciliation teacher

education and practice, I considered that what would be most interesting would be a more fulsome visualization of the relationships between texts. By fulsome, I realized that typical digital humanities approaches lacked a concern for the relationality of the texts analyzed, including: the relationships between a text and the texts or discourse communities traceable by who cites whom; the potential relationships between journal editorial mandates or biases; what kind of indexed impact metrics reflected or did not reflect the significance of texts; the lasting or changing relationships between different authors or traditions, and so much more. As Figure 26 illustrates, I began to map these relationships myself through graphing software — freehand and eye in the sense that manually creating shapes and approximate scales and distances based on the relationships I was quantifying but also qualifying through considering different layers of likewise interconnecting relationships.

Figure 26

Patrick Manually Mapping Relationships Between Texts



Note. Patrick using Lucidchart to manually map mid-level connections across one journal.

Towards making this process more sustainable across a decade or more of literature on truth and reconciliation in education, I took coding courses at the University of Ottawa. I learned basic Python script coding, at least enough to attempt to show the relationships between published articles, chapters, and books. To achieve representation of this information, I further had to teach myself how to take such data and feed it into automatic graphing software. Figures 27 and 28 are early example outputs of a script I engineered to use Digital Object Identifier (DOI) numbers to show different texts within a corpus as a citational web, including which texts link to which, and whether or not these relationships precipitate relational clusters of discourse (e.g., Fig. 27 & 28).

Figure 27

Patrick Exploring Citational Relational Webs of Early Literature Review Corpus

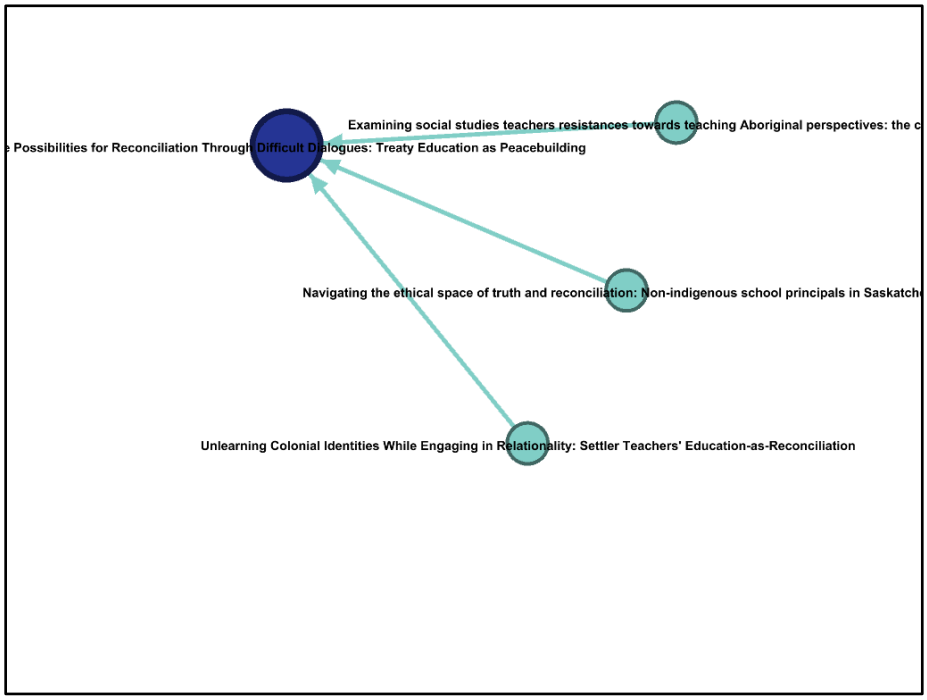


Figure 28

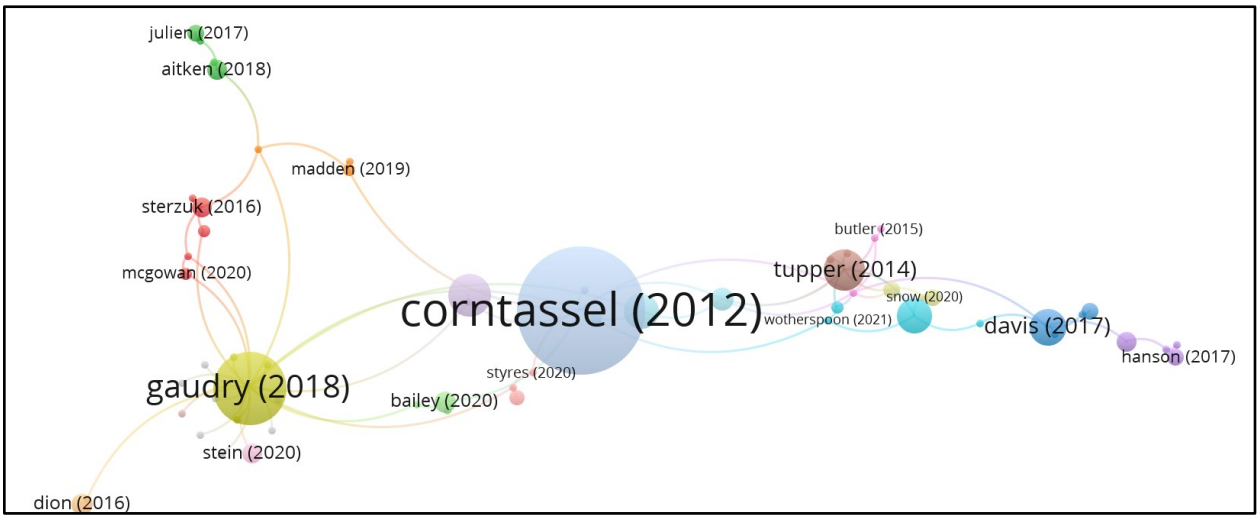
Patrick Exploring Citational Relational Webs of Early Literature Review Corpus

Note. Example clustering from a larger test collection with more DOIs via custom Python script and visualization through Gephi.

As shown in Figure 29, I learned of various other tools that could do similar work by extracting citational information from the Web of Science, a massive global database of published scholarship that retains certain kinds of metadata. Metadata is information about a digital object that provides relational context, including potentially who or what cites it.

Figure 29

Patrick Exploring Citational Webs across Web of Science/Scopus



Note. High level map of indexed Canadian Truth and Reconciliation education discourse using Web of Science data + VOSviewer.

As I continued what has now been a 5-year sustained literature review of truth and reconciliation teacher education and practice, particularly of the voices of Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous scholar allies, I quickly realized that what was useful from digital humanities was the *epistemological technology* it offered.

For example, Barnett et al. (2016) develop queer theorist Kara Keeling's concept of a QueerOS, an operating system that is cultural in its workings as much as it is engaged with technical and virtual existence, intentionally creating "ghosts in our machine" of digital and physical life that re-embody queer "digital interactions, both intentional and serendipitous, that lead to new pleasures and possibilities both online and off" (p. 51). Canadian digital humanists Rockwell and Sinclair (2016), who created Voyant, advance digital humanities as new forms of 'hermeneutica', or processes that animate dialogue and interaction as the core of scholarship, including the use of tools that allow visual and spatial interaction with texts as well as understanding and intervening on how these tools might modulate meaning. Mills (2019) argues that engagement with such technologies — thing and thinking-through — are now vital if scholars outside of computer science are to maintain a stake in both creation and mobilization of knowledge in an increasingly data-saturated and data-diverse world. What is to be gained is thought to be a "liberating" perspective, recognizing "real interpretive uncertainty" while

"shaking off the last commitments to causal explanation and shifting towards [a question-independent] cartography" (Wagner-Pacific et al., 2015, p. 4-5).

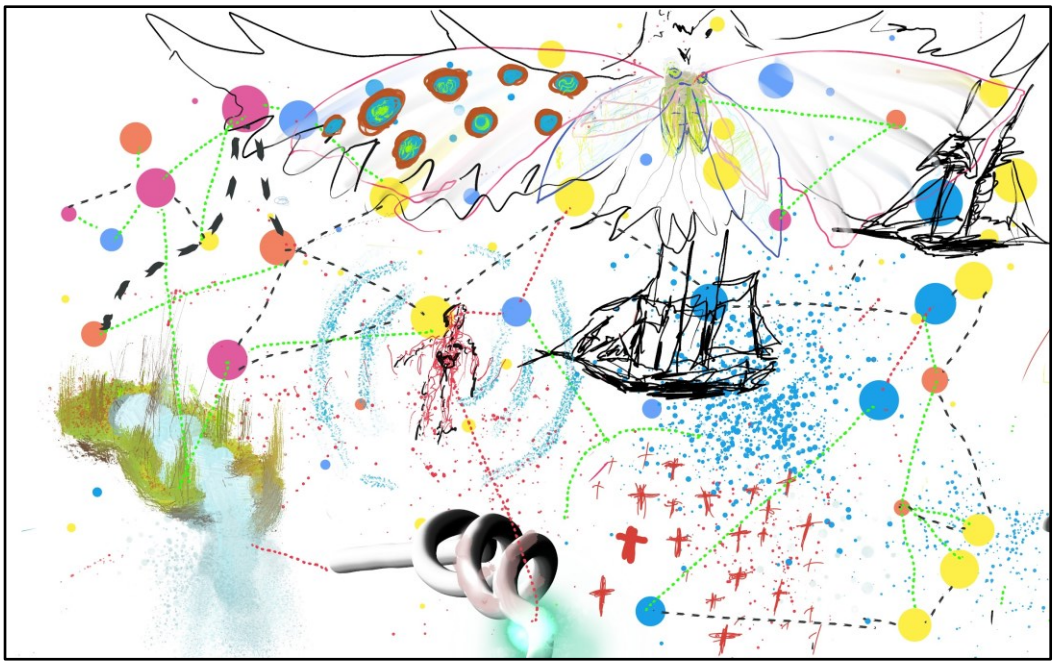
This shift away from causality, Ingvarsson (2021) argues, is an opportunity for researchers to engage in a relational paradigm of data and knowledge. The opportunity for curriculum studies and its reciprocal contribution, I explore later in my conclusion, is advancement of a similar relational turn. Ingvarsson's Digital Epistemology (2021) is also intentionally non-programmatic in its methods, emphasizing that digital thinking predates the 'thingness' of digital technology, can be carried out without commitments to an analog/digital binary, and so is undetermined by any specific technology in process or representational output. Ingvarsson traces Western digital epistemology to the early modern (16-18th century) episto-ontological practices of the emblem and cabinets of curiosities as modes of digital thought. Emblems were multi-modal abstract and/or figurative representations of an idea or individual, and arose as a collected genre in Europe alongside printing technology. Often combining visual, textual, spiritual, poetic, or other idiosyncratic elements, emblems are often misunderstood today to be fixed symbols, but were, according to Ingvarsson, actually modes of thought that "encouraged combination and composition; a call to create, rather than to interpret" (p. 10). Embedded in the colonial history of cabinets of curiosity are the epistemic precursors of the digital, making them distinct from modern museums. Unlike now-conventional archives and museum collections, cabinets of curiosity digitized the world towards free association and even playful engagement with the thing-ness and thought of knowledge (or data), situating knowledge "not as a hidden core of an expression or person", but as emergent of relationships made in context (p. 13). Such practices expanded data so broadly that it arguably allowed interfaces—as "productive meeting places"—between faith, science, embodiment, history and future now thought of as the mode of digital tools and art (Ingvarsson, 2021, p. 18). In a digital epistemology, however, even biological entities and their relationships to others can be considered digital data, like embodied physical differences between two genetically identical trees grown in different places (Thorp, 2020). Such a non-programmatic framework opens the meaning of an algorithm. While algorithms as things are often optimized for "efficiency and profitability, not for justice or the good" (O'Neil, 2017, pp. 129-30), in which the associations and relationships possible through data are used against those from which they are extracted, algorithmic thinking need not have an intrinsic negative valence (cf. Phillips & Ng-A-Fook,

2024). O'Neil (2017) notes, that algorithms' harmful potential stems from how they are conceived and manipulated, rather than some inherent quality. As these sets of code-ified decisions originate in the minds of the humans creating them, there remains the potential to develop a relational, empathetic algorithm for educational research. Such traditions as they continue can either maintain or unsettle the archive of what we consider to be knowledge in our disciplines: we can learn to read and represent them as relational.

In 2022, I initially proposed two possible branches of materialization of data: 1) a virtual reality experience in which the relational data of my data sets were kept intact and layered into the database so that audiences could read the text while also seeing (or hearing, etc.) the relational implications and influences flowing into and out of the written work (Fig. 30), and 2) a physical installation within a space, much like an installation art exhibit (Fig. 31). Either would thus become a prototypical alternative dissemination platform for educational research as well as a potential pedagogical experience for teacher educators and their students. In the next section, I discuss the relational data collection, analysis, and re/presentational methods I developed throughout my dissertation project towards relearning the full relational potential of data as what data is: something given.

Figure 30

One of the Author's Early Sketches of a Digital Relational Data Environment



Note. In this sketch, coloured dots represent conventional academic dissemination objects — e.g. articles, chapters, or dissertations I reviewed as part of my project. In my prototype, these texts would be readable alongside visibilized relational connections, such as citations of historical memory, land, spirituality, kinship, and more-than-human relations. An audience of this platform will be able to 'zoom in' on these relational objects for more sensory detail (if it were a digital environment).

Figure 31

Example of a Physical Space Relational Environment Created by a Data Artist

Note. This image depicts the installation work of data artist Nathalie Miebach. I included in my dissertation proposal to demonstrate what a relational data environment might look like in a broad sense. While Miebach substantiates weather data, my own prototype, the formal elements will be made up of visualized and/or materialized relational data that includes spirit, kinship, and human and more-than-human connection. (Nathalie Miebach, *Urban Weather Prairies - Symphonic Studies in D*, 2009, reed, wood, data, 16 x 15 x 15'; see http://nathaliemiebach.com/).

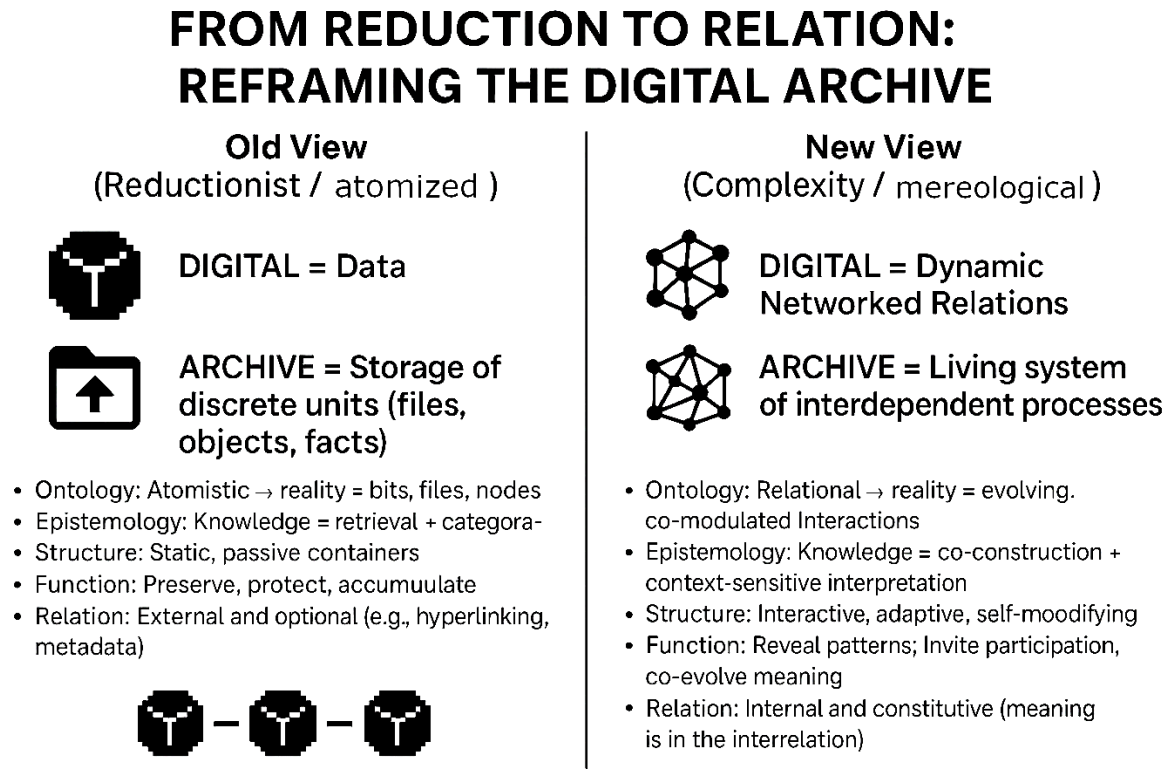
Through a settler colonial studies lens, Adams-Campbell et al. (2015) broaden the notion of the archive as not just "a space or place where knowledge is stored, but a set of knowledges in and of themselves" (p. 111). These authors argue that settler archival practices "play a direct and essential role in establishing and maintaining the righteous fiction of the nation-state and its fundamental desire to disavow the existence and rights of indigenous peoples and communities" by including them as data but denying the epistemological implications of this inclusion,

foreclosing actual encounters between settler colonial knowledge and any way of knowing that might challenge it (p. 110). Stoler (2002, qtd in Adams-Campbell, et al, 2015, p. 110) argues that archives should be seen as "epistemological experiments rather than as sources" in which "power relations [are] inscribed", as they are actually "intricate technologies of rule in themselves". Both epistemological and ontological archives, such as what knowledge and the modes in which we engage them through, should be intervened on as they identify "conditions of possibility that [shape] what [can] be written, what [warrants] repetition, what competencies [are] rewarded … what stories [can or cannot] be told" (Adams-Campbell, et al, 2015 p. 110). Similarly, Kēhaulani Kauanui (2016) argues that "a substantive engagement with settler colonialism also demands a deep rethinking of the associated concept of indigeneity—distinct from race, ethnicity, culture, and nation(ality)", even as most scholarship critical of settler colonialism is silent on this implication (p. 1). I follow Paradies (2020) who argues that truth telling means telling the unsettling truth about the dangers of modernity for global life, including its "deeply atrophied capacity" (p. 439) for relationality. "Outside of modern identity categories (e.g. Indigenous versus non-Indigenous)", a relational project of decoloniality is a "'praxis of living' 'open to whoever wants to do it'. As such, it does not preclude the possibility of settlers 'becoming' Indigenous or Indigenous people becoming settlers", but rather sees all beings responsible for "rupturing an insistent and incessant modernity" and remembering that truth is about a shard future as much as it is about the past (p. 442).

The same unconstrained view of causality reframes my earlier interests and borrowings from digital humanities into a deeper and complexifying perspective that exceeds digital/analog binaries and intervenes on notions of the digital — including the archives we maintain — towards encompassing data as biosocial and even spiritual. Complexity theorist Alicia Juarrero (2023) works against a reductionist view of reality as emergent of an atomized world, which overlooks the importance of relationships and interdependencies between parts and wholes—known in philosophy as mereology. She argues that many real-world systems, like organisms, cultures, and ecosystems, exhibit emergent properties that arise from dynamic, coordinated interactions, not just from basic physical components. Such complex systems challenge the notion that all phenomena are just superficial effects of underlying atoms and forces, and instead reveal how higher-level structures can influence their components reciprocally — rethinking what might be agential; I attempt to summarize this shift in Figure 32.

Figure 32

Understanding the Digital/Data and Archive as Mereological



I propose that the mereological life of our data and archives includes spirit as a mutually interconnecting agential relative that can, if we acknowledge its existence and attempt to share how we understand its relation to us, allow us to re-learn how to care (conceive of ethics) in ways most needed by ourselves and our more-than-human kin. Remembering such deep ethics in how we live, research, and teach, and how we are continually representing ourselves and our knowledges thus implicates research as an *aesthetico-political* praxis. The aesthetico-political refers to the intersection of aesthetic experience and political structures in shaping subjectivities, ethical relations, and social imaginaries (Rancière, 2004). The aesthetico-political is concerned with how perceptions, sensations, and embodied engagements influence political realities, particularly in relation to power, justice, and knowledge production. Western theorists of the aesthetico-political remember Merleau-Ponty's final arrival at the flesh, which "became the way of being, not just of individual humans and animals, but also of society and the world at large" (Plot, 2013, p. 219). Westernized thinkers followed through on this enfleshment of philosophy to consider the flesh as "a collective way of being of society that is neither just object nor just

subject, neither just visible nor just seer, but both" (Plot, 2013, p. 219). Being enfleshed is to exist "as simultaneously active *and* passive, subject *and* object, seer *and* visible" (Plot, 2013, p. 218). For Arendt, this was at the heart of how we understand the world and what is just. The aesthetico-political is how "being and appearing" coincide in what Arendt described as the "space of appearance" (1958, p. 199). What is real is what appears or is shown (Arendt, 1978). Yet, despite its criticality to how we understand our political relationships, including democracy writ large, westernized theories always fail at the point of being able to observe themselves — "it is also the case that for all flesh there is always a 'blind spot,'" or limitations of perception (Plot, 2013, p. 219). For example, I might have a deep interdisciplinary love and sense of responsibility for cicadas, while being blind to the material experiences and spiritual kinships of students who likewise do not share my ethical perception of cicadas — but do know other entities in deep ethical ways I may not — because of our differing biosocial coordinates. In making our ethical understandings visible through aesthetic modes, we may together find ways to make differing needs and attending responsibilities visible to each other. This aesthetico-political engagement rebirths "truth" as requiring a radically relational trust and bridging between individual limitations of perception. I thus considered what could be in our blind spots as we attempt to represent knowledges, inclusive of our hopes, fears, and dreams, around topics like truth and reconciliation, and so exceed the limitations of how we might represent and therefore conceive of their implicated futurities — or futures imagined together as unconstrained by our present material and imaginative limitations.

These entangling but commensurate trajectories of thinking, about data as relational, alive, and even inspirited, and thus embodied within us and our archives, returned me to the materialization of data as not necessarily a binary choice between a digital space or physical place. Rather I considered the relationality of data, mediated as research data but always honouring its relational complexity, and then how I might re-present the relationality of data in the shared physical *and* imaginative planes we might share or not as research dissemination. At the very least, I offer that this project opens possibilities for how we might traverse together through inspirited and kindred ways of at least *trying* to do so. Such reflective, reflexive, and refractive indwelling resonated across and blurred the temporal and ontological dimensions of my research, including my 1) literature review (Phillips, 2024) and methodological theorizing (Phillips, 2025a), 2) my data collection and interpretation, and 3) my arts-based collaborations

towards sharing my findings in ways that truly honour the relationality of my data, including how it is published, or made public, in space and place. I attend to the first and second phase of my methods work in my next section, and conclude with a discussion of how I have and will continue to honour the relationality of my data in future.

Reimagining the Archive and Archiving as Aesthetico-Political Life

Echoing Jones (2019) and the digital humanists, designer and data scientist Hepworth (2017) emphasizes that the biggest implication of research in an increasingly mediated and data-saturated world is that researchers now "have a responsibility to educate ourselves about the literate and immersive aspects of [data design] within the communities where we want to share data" (p. 18). Hepworth writes as a graphic designer towards understanding how the machinations of big data processes affect representation of research data and findings. Hepworth focuses this question as an issue of the visual first and foremost: the "subjective, persuasive practice of data visualization becomes an essential part" of research output, while also shifting the importance of considering the *rhetorical* power of data visualisations into a foreground concern, as working with expansive datasets recasts visualization form "an optional research output [into] a necessity for data exploration" (p. 12). While Hepworth stresses that this is a responsibility for those *choosing* to engage with data-driven trends in research, I contend that this is a growing responsibility for anyone who engages with the data-driven and data-visualized world of research publication, as these systems, where even the most qualitative data then resides, are largely mediated by the algorithms and visual regimes of big data.

Hepworth's (2017) title, "Big Data Visualization: Promises & Pitfalls", recalls Arts-Based Educational Researcher (ABER) Elliot Eisner's (1997) discussion of "The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation" twenty years earlier, suggesting that it is worth considering why visual forms of data representation in education are still considered alternative despite their ostensible rhetorical potential. "One part of [this] context," Eisner (1997) gleans, is:

> […] the fact that until quite recently discussions of qualitative research methods almost always were reduced to doing ethnography; to do qualitative research for many in our field was to do ethnography. It is not difficult to understand why ethnography was a safe haven for researchers. Ethnography is a subset of cultural anthropology, and cultural anthropology is a division of the social sciences. It is, one might say, a member of the

> same church. In addition, ethnography, some people believed, had a teachable and learnable "method," it had a technical language, and most important, it had scholarly standards. It was a recognized discipline. (p. 5).

Arguably, over twenty years later, this context is still accurate, despite, as Eisner notes, that the concept of research has continued to broaden, including the concept of qualitative research, and different "shapes" of research representation are ostensibly welcome (Leavy, 2009). Yet, still, the social science text, e.g. journal article or book chapter, remains the quintessential form of data *representation* in educational research, while, in the context of big data algorithmic impact rankings, new scholars arguably must make their ideas fit the representational shapes that confer the most professional currency. In other words, the question of what should count as research or its data has perhaps not changed since Eisner's era of hopeful experimentation. Eisner's point about this silence stands: "This question—what should count as research—leads to a very deep agenda. It is also an agenda with high stakes for it pertains to matters of legitimacy, authority, and ultimately to who possesses the power to publish and promote" (p. 5). Twenty years later, this question now implicates far more than prestige. What I mean to stress here is that research as representation implies a deeper cultural terrain of research imagination than that of disciplinary orthodoxy. It implicates how we understand ourselves as human beings in relation with others and more-than-human others. Further implicated, then, is how one goes about imagining alternatives.

Eisner (1997) likened pursuit of new forms of data representation as akin to jumping off an edge as a kind of leap of faith. For Eisner the motivation of this leap was not to abolish the written word in research, but towards "engendering a sense of empathy for the lives of the people they wish us to know":

> Why empathy? Because we have begun to realize that human feeling does not pollute understanding. In fact, understanding others and the situations they face may well require it. Forms of data representation that contribute to empathic participation in the lives of others are necessary for having one kind of access to their lives. (p. 8)

Twenty years later, Hepworth (2017) stresses similar potential for understanding the rhetorical and cultural value of data as visualisation:

> At their best, big data visualizations put data into a human context by relating scientific and statistical insights to environmental and social contexts. They highlight perspectives

> about our world, and our societies, that we can collectively benefit from. Most importantly, they build understanding between users and the people who interact with the data generating systems we study by fostering respect and empathy for people and situations of which we would otherwise be unaware […] When we're well informed, we can use the persuasive qualities of big data visualization to better inform others and to foster empathy. (p. 14-19)

Indeed, it is the persuasive qualities of data materialization and, through my epistemological frameworks, the ethico-empathetic potential of ABER that I bring together in my methods. I offer that aesthetico-politico methods that re-materialize the relationality of data, inclusive of spirit, have the potential to realize a relational methodology in not only how research is performed, but also in how it is ultimately represented and shared. Visual and other materializing methods shift meaning-making away from control of interpretation in educational research to "enhancement of perspective" through "powerful transmutation of feelings, thoughts, and images into an aesthetic form", making them "best capable of persuading the percipient to see educational phenomena in new ways, and to entertain questions about them that might have otherwise been left unasked" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 96). In my research, this means making tangible, through visual and other sensorial registers, the relational connections suffusing research in the emerging field of truth and reconciliation teacher education understood also as an expanding field of relational implication, provocation, and kinship possibility.

In turn, here I report on my methods. Rather than a typical structured or semi-structured interview process and coding analysis, I developed a tentative *relational conversational* interview protocol combined with collaborative visual interpretation/analysis of the interview data which I currently term *relational data portraiture* as a means of keeping visible/recognizable the relational implications or data of the interviews. Because it proved difficult to engage my participants in attentive and relational conversation and attend to the perceptual and reflexive complexities of visualizing or otherwise materialize what was being said, this further imbricated my intersubjective reading-as-listening methodology (Phillips, 2024) as developed for my literature review as a means of still being present and resonant with what I found to be the relational spirit of what was being brought into presence through the conversations (initially in my reading of texts and then in the data as given by my participants). This relational impulse, of an inspirited relational methodology (Phillips, 2025a), then informed

and was informed by my arts-based relating to my data, and ultimately its present and future materialization as findings—or, rather, offerings of data given.

Literature Review and Relational Frameworks: Transeunt Listening and Inspirited Relationality

The literature review that informed my project was published in 2024 as "The Transeunt Listener" in the Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies. *Transeunt listening* is an intentionally relational methodology I developed for reading the relationality of the literature as an emerging relational field. This method emerged as an ethical approach to engaging with Truth and Reconciliation education discourse and practice. I critiqued the limitations of conventional academic discourse and proposed an alternative method of listening that fosters relational understanding and ethical transformation, rather than focusing on the limited affordances of textual dissemination. Methodologically, the study draws on the work of scholars like Jennifer Markides (2023) (and who would become one of my participants) and Lisa Farley (2010), emphasizing a reflexive engagement with texts as sites of intersubjective change. Through an analysis of curriculum studies, Indigenous perspectives, and teacher education, I identified three key tensions: the struggle between belonging and self-determination, the need to disrupt settler consciousness, and the hope for an expanded ethical capacity among educators. I concluded with the offering that transeunt listening can serve as a pedagogical and ethical tool for fostering meaningful re-learning — rather than perpetual ‘unlearning’ or ‘unsettling’ and its commodification — and so advancing the true spirit of Truth and Reconciliation education.

I further developed my methodological frameworks as likewise relationally responsive to my data and its imbricating implications that moved non-linearly across my work and thinking. This presently unpublished article (Phillips, 2025a), "Relational Lacunae and (Re)Turning," attempts a fulsome framework for addressing one of the central calls of my literature review work: a robust and multivalent discourse of spirit in education and what we might mean or could mean by its invocation. I addressed the onto-epistemological dimensions of relationality within Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge systems, particularly in curriculum studies. I critiqued the westernized limitations of relationality research and theorizing, and argued for a reconceptualization of relationality that integrates Indigenous perspectives, re-remembered kinship, and engagement with spirit. Developing a methodological approach rooted in ethical and kinship relationality, I propose that true relational learning requires recognizing spirit as a

fundamental aspect of knowledge and being. Through an analysis of western and Indigenous relational paradigms, the study identifies a phenomenon of gaps—termed "relational lacunae"—where western academia and westernized subjects fail to fully engage with and by extension represent relational knowledge. I centre a re-learning process that includes more-than-human kinship and an ethics of responsibility, positioning this as essential for decolonial educational futures.

The central, resolute imagining across my work is the ethical transformation of education through deep listening and relational engagement. While the first article focuses on transeunt listening as a pedagogical approach to decolonial education and Truth and Reconciliation research and practice that continues to be largely related to students through texts, the second expands this framework by incorporating spirit and kinship into relational methodologies to further question the representational implications of relationality in ostensibly relational education. The result is hopefully a methodological pathway to deepen the ethical commitments suggested by the literature and its practitioners, emphasizing that relational gaps in knowledge can only be bridged through an embodied and inspirited approach to education. While I shortly discuss my subsequent empirical research work/data collection, these processes were neither epistemologically nor ontologically linear. My research participants and the data that they offered, as given, contributed to the refinement of my conceptual articulations, and vice versa how I approached their data in ways that honoured, to the best of my abilities, the relational implications of the same data.

My relational reading of the literature and concurrent development of my frameworks thus applied to how I selected my research participants. As shown in Table 1, I selected six authors of both Indigenous (n=3) and non-Indigenous backgrounds (n=3). I considered both potential conventional impact of authors on the discourse of truth and reconciliation as an emerging relational field. I considered how voices and ideas might be important but not as widely cited in the literature, and whose work had resonated in particular with the central findings and implications of my literature review and frameworks. I considered multiple relational facets to each potential participant as not just a source of relational data to be collected, but a participant in it being cared for and amplified. In turn, I carefully allowed relational feedback from my participant’s datasets flow non-linearly into my frameworks.

Table 1

Selected Research Participants

Scholar	Relational Location	Impact on the Literature
Dwayne Donald	Paspasechase Cree scholar in the Edmonton area. Knowledge holder and educator. Curriculum studies scholar as well.	Perhaps the most influential Indigenous scholar in curriculum studies today. Primary reference for concepts of relationality, including ethical and kinship. Further offers critique of TRC education and conventional modes of teaching/educating as needing to change if processes like TRC education are to be realized/advanced. Offers a focus on environment-based teaching rather than textual production.
Kiera Brant-Birioukov	Emerging Haudenosaunee curriculum studies scholar and educator from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Just finishing/ed her doctorate at UBC.	Scholar's work engaged with the spirit and intent of TRC education without necessarily adopting prevailing TRC education as the model of how to approach such change. Instead, works towards conceptualizing and teaching through Haudenosaunee thought and being as curricula in their own right, for Haudenosaunee learners and educators while acknowledging and offering the possible opportunities for non-Indigenous learners and scholars to learn and know differently.
Jennifer Markides	Emerging Red River Métis curriculum studies scholar and	Approaches TRC education as a relational process first and foremost. Works focus on

	Indigenous education scholar and practitioner from the High River area of Alberta. Presently a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous education at the University of Calgary.	relationality as praxis, including published and in-process work. Interested in methodology in a similar vein to my own interests.
Brooke Madden	Emerging non-Indigenous scholar from Alberta. At the time of my research, she was an assistant professor of teacher education at the University of Alberta.	Influential publications that offer many scholars ways of critiquing TRC teacher education as stuck in prevailing colonial structures and notions of who a teacher can or should be.
Jennifer Tupper	Non-Indigenous history education scholar from Alberta. Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.	Influential scholar on topics directly connected to TRC teacher education, including treaty education and settler colonial consciousness in historical thinking and settler life writing practices.
Lisa Howell	Emerging non-Indigenous scholar from the Ottawa area. Postdoc at uOttawa at the time of data collection, where she was and continues to teach on topics like the TRC to teacher candidates.	Howell's thesis was highly aligned with my own research, as it was about a relational way of understanding teaching of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in a so-called era of truth and reconciliation. She also works and publishes with First Nations scholars while further developing TRC-responsive teacher education and classroom resources like Project of Heart. She values teaching as much as written scholarship.

I intentionally created more space in my data collection for relatively emergent scholars, while keeping the datasets in conversation with more established and influential scholars. I was not able to make contact with Brooke Madden. I was informed by one of my participants that I should probably not expect to hear back from this potential participant nor should I pursue the connection, as Madden was caught the politics of her institution at the time — her colleagues were questioning the validity of her work as a non-Indigenous scholar and were investigating her as a 'pretendian,' even if she never claimed Indigenous identity. I moved forward with 5 participants and proceeded to design my interview methodology.

Interviews: Collaborative Storying and Visualizing

To establish an interview 'design' for my participants, I first drew inspiration from Indigenous methods of storytelling and 'yarning' in Indigenous research methods. Wright et al. (2012) suggests that storytelling is especially suited to integrating nonhuman entities (e.g., animals, or objects or entities not typically seen as animate or agential) into data collection and analysis. *Yarning*, meanwhile, extends the concept of storytelling into a relational and collaborative space of data collection between researcher and researcher, generating shared knowledge that challenges typical Western methods of analysis (Walker et al., 2014).

To facilitate these two ways of speaking, I developed an initial general list of questions I would ask each participant:

1. When you think of truth and reconciliation in teacher education, what do you see in your mind's eye?
2. How do concepts of relationality inform your research?
3. When you think of the future outcomes of truth and reconciliation education, what do you imagine?
4. In what ways has/does your research change, add to, or is influenced by your own understandings of relationality?
5. Are there influential relational connections and/or inputs that support your work but are difficult to represent in publication/dissemination?
6. What would the relational connections of your research look like? Feel free to describe with words, images/symbols, drawings, sounds, tactile registers, or other sensorial means.

Further, in addition to the baseline set of questions above, I created questions that directly related to not only the ideas and questions raised by my authors in their published texts but also my

relational wonderings as I read across the texts. I then left the rest of the interview up to where the participant would take the conversation. I included some of my own sense of implied meanings in my initial custom questions, but I purposely allowed myself to be open to listen and follow — but also relate in real time how my participants' sharing of data related to my private reading of their work, my own teaching and writing, and my own experiences with the same topics. In this way, my intention was to be open as a relational participant, offering my own relational data in reciprocity, rather than simply using interviews for ethnographic extraction of data. I further allowed my instruments to shift as new relational implications emerged as my academic reading, relational reading, my participants' responses to my questions, and my own oral reflections in conversation. These shifts in thought and feeling continued across my mapping-turned-data portraiture, as I discuss later in this section. These shifts resulted in feeling the resonance between my general and specific questions across participants; pragmatically this meant adjustments of my main questions and follow-up questions so that despite customizing each set of questions for each participant, we dwelled in kindred spaces or places of intention and meaning. This thinking-through our data as participant/ory as well meant that I revisited my literature review notes, interview transcripts, theoretical frameworks, and the representational/arts-based layers of interpretation non-linearly.

For my first interview, I spoke with Dwayne Donald. To prepare for this experimental first, I prepared a large piece of drawing paper (approx. 60 x 106 cm; this size was used consistently moving forward). I intuited that I could not predict how much, or if at all, participants would draw/doodle during our conversation. I also wanted to provide a sense of what I was thinking of by offering an initial seed to the conversation. As shown in Figure 33, for Dwayne's drawing space this meant the black and white vertical structure in the left-centre of the page.

I learned in my first interview that my initial main question #6 is not a typical ask of research participants — to start drawing or doodling. My participants and I felt that attending the drawing/mark-making could be distracting; because my participants had agreed to only 60 minutes of interview time and none were accustomed to drawing, I quickly realized that this would become limiting to our ability to converse. Further given that future interviews would be conducted over Zoom, I decided to revise my plans for the visualizing of the data. I proceeded to

then make very brief visual notes for and by myself, so that I could stay present in the conversation with my participants.

I then found myself in more of a studio-based (i.e., alone in my studio once back from the 'field'); all visual works in relation to the interviews (what I term data portraits) were done by me. I started with a mapping approach — trying to create conceptual maps of what participants were saying but listening for what might be the underlying relational gaps or theoretical, perceptual, or experiential privatizations. The visualizing process started in my embodied emotions and imagination, but also in the space between the oral interview (video/audio and transcript), the published texts, and my arts-based attempts to re/present what I was experiencing/understanding beyond what a code or word/academic concept might be able to represent. As I share later, doing so eventually transformed the visualization approach itself away from mapping and more towards relational representations that more directly centred the data as animate.

As I listened and, if possible, sketched, I felt out what might be resonating through my belly button; what was implicated by several of my participants and what I felt was at the heart and spirit of what was being said and refracted through myself. In Table 2, I show a follow-up question that shifted my research in key ways; my research notes and some of my questions to authors did implicate spirit as a missing part of the more-than-human representations/discussions, but I felt it becoming incredibly central to my main research questions/intentions. So, before I met with each other participant, I created a question that more explicitly talked about spirit and some, to me and through listening with other participants, questions that might resonate along this relational lacuna (Phillips, 2025a) I had realized was felt by me and understood by me but was not actually represented in text.

Table 2

Example Specific Questions Prepared for Each Participant

Follow-up question with Dwayne Donald	
Dwayne Donald	You just reminded me of what I've been noticing in the literature. Most authors mentioned the importance of spirit or spirituality. … But no one really explains what they mean by it. And not that they need to explain spirituality … but there's nothing beyond just mentioning it. So, I'm wondering … what place do

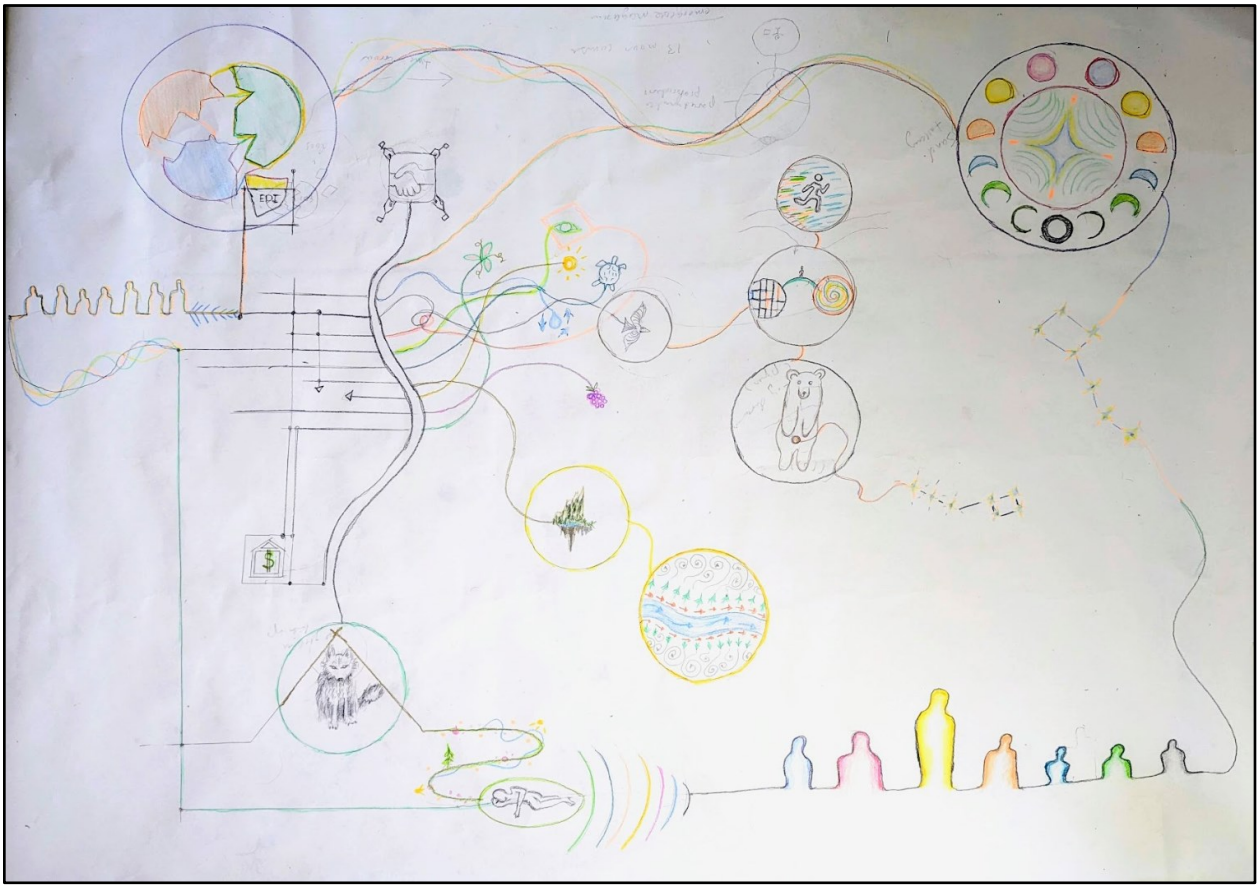
	you see spirituality having in teacher education?
Relationally emergent follow-up questions prepared for later participants	
Lisa Howell	You note in your thesis that research with teachers who did Project of Heart shows key emotional engagement, which Smith calls "heart and spirit" learning. Given, and perhaps despite, the contentious status of spirituality in education in general, can you go into more detail about what heart and spirit learning looks like, and why it is key to truth and reconciliation education?
Kiera Brant-Birioukov	You write that, "Alas, there is no room for spirit in our contemporary consciousness as citizens of Turtle Island" but also that "... the knowledge as a living entity derived from this land remains there. It can be sought, understood, and revitalized once again, so long as we have the wherewithal to make meaning from the land." How might this revitalization be materialized in teacher education, and how might curricular imaginaries need to transform to understand this sense of spirit?
Jennifer Tupper	Reading across your work and up to your most recent publications, I've noticed more mention of spirit and spirituality as being integral to the meaning of concepts like reconciliation and treaty. If you're comfortable sharing, how has a sense of spirit informed your life and work?
Jennifer Markides	Elsewhere you have written, "From religion to science, it may seem a leap to consider cosmology as the root of hegemonic discourses about the Earth and its inhabitants, but the stories we live by—our truths—influence the ways we interact with each other and the more-than-human world." What cosmologies of relation do you see / feel / unlearn and learn through?

Returning continually to the data included not leaving my initial drawing (and future drawings) to be data extracted into text, I reiterated on how I was representing my data; this

further implicated how I was being changed by my encounter with it. I realized that I wanted to give the relational data a priority in representation of the data, as partial as it could be as an individual human being — but also kin to every other human being and so guided by a sense of love and compassion for my data including how I was part of it. This changed my way of representing the data by looking at it as a subject, with a spirit, and deserving of the same observational respect as a portrait artist would draw, sculpt, or represent in otherwise arts-based practices. Here, observation is always considering that you are also one observed and you are observing yourself and being aware of your own limitations and strengths; see Figures 33 through 37 for examples of how these relational data portraits progressed visually.

Figure 33

Dwayne Donald Literature & Interview Visualization



Note. My first relational data portrait — at the time conceptualized more as "data visualizations." (Graphite and wax pencil on paper, approx. 61 x 121 cm). I drew the central mirrored curved lines and the fort-like structure enclosing a handshake before I met with Donald. I also added some of the more colourful lines radiating from the right side. These visual 'seeds' were meant

to be a starting point from my reading into our conversation, as I was hoping we could have an expansive conversation spanning from Donald's earlier works on colonial frontier logics (2009) through to his most recent published piece (2021) in which he discusses walking into kinship relationality with his students on the land. The rest of the imagery is a result of myself either trying to make quick visual notations during our conversation or done post-interview while reviewing the transcripts and his published work as well as my notes.

Figure 34

Lisa Howell Relational Data Portrait

Note. My second data portrait, showing a transitional state away from mapping and more towards creating a holistic image (Graphite, marker, and wax pencil on paper, approx. 61 x 121 cm). In this work, I began to listen and read more intently for the more-than-human — including of spirit or what might be spirit. Howell (personal communication, 14 June 2023) answered my first general question by describing a great tree emerging through a broken heart. Across her doctoral dissertation work (2022), I attended particularly to the more-than-human references in her writing, including her memories of fireflies, her relating to the Akikodjiwan and Akikpautik (Pipe Bowl Falls), located in the Ottawa River just upstream from Canada's Parliament, kayaking, and the relational lessons of the more-than-human Howell was gifted by her Cree students and shared in her thesis (e.g., around geese). In our conversation and my visualization of it, I began to focus on the connections of and to spirit, as the various spirit lines and explicit umbilical spirit figure in the red circle is my attempt to visualize; belly-button teachings were very central to Howell’s dissertation unlearning.

Figure 35

Jennifer Markides Relational Data Portrait

Note. My third data portrait, this time being more attentive to the relationality of the data as a whole — including what was written, spoken, and refracted or resonated within myself as a reader/listener/observer. (Graphite, marker, and wax pencil on paper, approx. 61 x 121 cm).

The emphasis in Markides's (2023) own work on "learning to live relationally" *vis a vis* our conversations contributed to my realization of my work as akin to portraiture, as I was indeed in a practice of noticing relations around me — not just the more than human as bio-ecological entities, but also in my data. My initial conversation and immersion in Dwayne Donald's data further made this noticing more noticeable, as I had reflected on what it was that I was resonating with in our conversation, his data, and my experience of it. Here, I have used a figure to represent Markides relational thinking and my attempt to aesthetically and affectively relate to her experience with attending to cosmological scales while at the same time grounding herself in the micro—all of which connect us across space and time, including future.

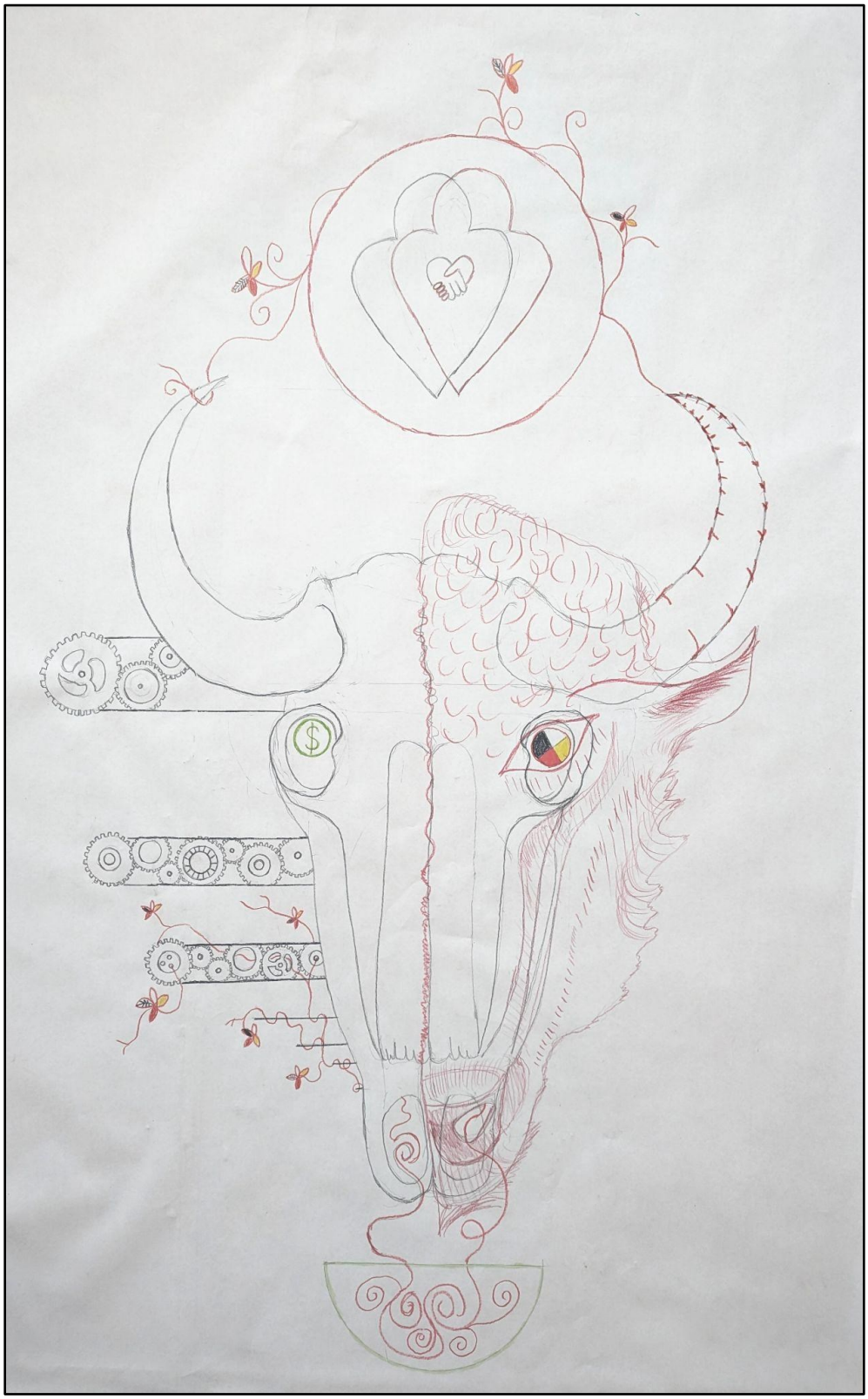
Figure 36

Kiera Brant-Birioukov Relational Data Portrait

Note. As my portraiture work developed, I listened for what was the most central to the relational and 'spirit' of data as shared by my participants and given through their writing. (Graphite and wax pencil on paper, approx. 61 x 121 cm). Here, the centrality of corn as teacher and the reality of Haudenosaunee thinking-knowing-being produced a particularly striking image. The central ring represents the curricular experience of estrangement as part of *kanenhstóhare* (ga nunhs doe ha ray), Brant-Birioukov's (2022) curriculum of Haudenosaunee thought and worldview grounded in real and spiritual — including the reality of the spiritual — importance of corn in Haudenosaunee life. The spirit and agency of corn as teacher transects and reconnects the phases of Brant-Birioukov's curriculum, which further links traditional Haudenosaunee teachings as real and interconnected with the lessons that came to Brant-Birioukov in her garden while working on her thesis. The central kernel is embraced by soil, to which we must imaginatively and literally attend to if we are to escape colonial lifeways. We must learn to care for the land and work against "land phobia" (K. Brant-Birioukov, personal communication, 23 July 2023).

Figure 37

Jennifer Tupper Relational Data Portrait



Note. My final data portrait. (Graphite and wax pencil on paper, approx. 61 x 121 cm). Here, my portraiture became more selective towards the spiritual and its most resonant implications from my dataset(s). Although only discussed as a private experience by my participant here, the importance of ceremony and seeing through its spirit, including my participants' unpublished thinking around treaty after these experiences, unites the piece. The centrality of the buffalo skull being re-enfleshed references the centrality of this image and its ambiguity for Tupper in her settler life writing (2020) and my own thinking around how buffalo are being reintroduced into the prairies as a biosocial but also spiritual act of re-Indigenizing the land. The gears represent Tupper's (personal communication, August 12, 2023) reflections on what she calls "academic grind culture" and how it keeps all of us yoked to neoliberal lifeways. The symbol at the top represents the importance of Treaty and treaty education (e.g. Tupper, 2014) for Tupper and her work, but which she has not had time to develop further in light of her more recent yet private experiences with ceremony.

Across this development, my representational choices drew from a non-linear return to my datasets as given: returning to places of the literature as the world and discourse changed, my own drawings and even the smallest aspect of my first map-like attempt were changing, and so what I felt were contributing to a potential answer to my main research questions. Materially, I suggest this might be seen in some of my representational choices across the 5 portraits. What I intended as representations of spirit and interconnection of spirit/relationality/kinship became more prominent. I should note here that I did not consciously shift the orientation of the drawing surface from landscape to portrait; this seemed to fit what I was seeing in my mind and flowed from my representations as they developed. It is when I finished the second and third piece that I realized I had done so, and that I was creating what might be considered portraits. This led me to review my own understanding but also broader perspectives on how portraiture had been applied in arts-based inquiry.

Discussion: Relational Data Portraiture and Non-Extractive Interpretation

Perhaps the most influential portraiture methods stem from Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis's (1997) portraiture methodology that ostensibly bridges art and social science. Developed within the field of educational research, portraiture seeks to capture the nuanced, complex essence of human experiences and social settings. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016) explains:

> Portraiture is within the realm of qualitative inquiry. It's a phenomenological methodology, but it is distinctive in that it is the first social scientific methodology that is explicit in blending art and science, bridging empiricism and aestheticism. It cares deeply about rigorous empirical description, but it also cares a lot about the artfulness of the doing of it and the displaying of it… the ways in which portraiture is written, composed, developed, and presented to an audience. The other way in which it's distinctive is that it is very much written for multiple and diverse audiences. It is intentionally inclusive. That is, it is not just written for members of the Academy, for my colleagues and my students, but for broader, eclectic audiences. The idea is to get people interested in thinking about important questions in complicated, grounded, thoughtful ways. And so, it is intentionally provocative. It hopes to invite a response from the reader. As an interpretive narrative, portraits aspire to being beautifully and evocatively written, deep and compelling stories. (p. 19)

These methods focus particularly on a search for goodness—the strengths, aspirations, and positive dimensions of individuals and communities. As Lightfoot explains, "goodness" here does not mean "that [portraiture] tries to idealize or romanticize human experience or social reality, but rather, that it is a counterpoint to so much of social science inquiry that has traditionally been preoccupied with pathology … Portraiture very purposefully says we're going to try to understand what's worthy and strong; always recognizing of course that goodness is inevitably laced with imperfection" (p 20). The modes and foundational examples of these portraits were in the form of narrative, such as "Souls of Black Folk" by W. E. B. Du Bois, which Lightfoot suggests is "more of a socio-historical mural than a portrait, where Du Bois paints himself into a southern, segregated, racial landscape as a rural school" (p. 23). The theories that inform portraiture here include those of Geertz, Eisner, William James, and Dewey.

My work diverged here in several important areas. Of course, I was interested in sensorial registers different than the textual. However, even theoretically, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis's portraiture methodology remains in the realm of text — portraits derivative of their methodology are constituted of prose on a page — and further excludes direct references to or exemplars of portraiture as a visual or other material practice. I was also committed to not re-enfolding my data into one language or system of signification and felt that this was inseparable

from committing to thinking through more than one way of understanding relationality or my data, in ways that at least reduce the loss of its relational implications in its final representation. These included, of course, feeling epistemological and ontological kinship with Indigenous ways of thinking-knowing-being alongside my inherited westernized ways of understanding. I reflected on the meaning of data and what it might mean if we considered a portrait of data.

As data science researchers Donath et al. (2010) describe a portrait as data, "Portraits have long used 'data' in their depictions. In Renaissance paintings, richly rendered and highly symbolic garments and possessions portrayed social position … in contemporary work, the person may be evoked only through their personal possessions" (p. 375). As Donath et al. (2010) consider a visual arts perspective on data, they continue:

> A portrait is an evocative depiction, meant to convey something about the subject's character or role in society. The term "portrait" also highlights the subjectivity of the representation … A portrait involves negotiations between the subject and artist: the subject may wish to be portrayed in an ideal light, while the artist may want to show what they think the subject is really like. This tension, as well as the beliefs and conventions of the culture in which it is created, shapes the portrait. (p. 375)

Donath et al. (2010) write from the contexts of representing social network data, or what they call "vast shadow bodies of data" accrued around us by our online discussions, tracked packages, our locations sensed, and our educational and medical histories" and now presumably what is possible with AI. Donath et al. (2010) see these "data bodies extend in time, reaching into the past, charting the evolution of one's ideas, career, and style" (p. 375). Such portraits still use a humanizing understanding of visualizing via metaphor. "Metaphors", according to Donath et al. (2010), "help us understand one thing in terms of another — it has been argued that all of our ability for abstract thought is by using metaphor to build up understanding from a physical foundation" (Donath p. 379; see also Lakoff & Johnson, 2008, for a more in-depth discussion). Considering this premise as biaxial brings embodied experience and data as alive into relation of data as given and data as research subject, or into intersubjective relation with researcher, participant, and viewer/reader. The repertoires we afford ourselves to interpret data allow us (or not) to move between abstract thought and the shared planes of existence we share, and in doing so contribute or expand our ability for relating across them and our individual internalized experiences.

As I was committed to thinking about data beyond a data science model, I further considered visual arts-based precedents for data collection, including Bagnoli's (2009) graphic elicitation techniques of self-portraiture and relational maps and Jongeward's (2009) "visual portraits". Bagnoli argues that such techniques go beyond traditionally verbal constraints of qualitative interviews, accessing and creating knowledge not reducible to written language, and enhancing "empathic understanding" towards helping "us pay attention to reality in different ways" (p. 558). Similarly, Jongeward argues that the creation of visual artifacts with participants allows researchers to find a relational space alongside participants.

However, all these perspectives treated the materialization of the data as mediating tool rather than a relational event in and of itself. I further considered how Indigenous researchers might be approaching arts-based methods that might better escape and so transcend the "idealist/materialist dichotomist approach that had dominated the history of modern Western thought" (Plot, 2013, p. 218) that aesthetico-political philosophers wished for but appeared to never quite achieve or otherwise abdicate. According to my own experience with the aesthetico-political as contextualized in my data as given, I considered how *spirit* might be re/presented in ways that further consider the materialization of the data as worthy of honour and kinship.

Métis educational researcher Lynn Lavallée's (2009) Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection models capacity for methodological reciprocity and recognition of spirit — a missing, as identified through my frameworks and literature review and reflexive methods development, foundation for relating to each other as human and more-than-human kin. While I do not claim to be using Indigenous methods *per se*, I do claim good intentions in materializing what I consider an inspirited relational impulse.

According to Lavallée (2009), Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection is commensurate with arts-based educational research traditions and other qualitative approaches established in academia in that it fits into a participatory action research paradigm and was inspired by practices like photovoice. However, it adapts this extractive paradigm to take seriously that through an Anishnaabe worldview, "when an artist makes something, such as a painting, …[their] energy is placed into that object and each piece will have a different energy", or, I would add, spirit (p. 30). So, "the making of symbols and art is a spiritual process unique for each person" (p. 30). At the same time, however, these symbols cannot be separated as they emerge from a collective process sustained by an interconnected reality of relationships,

including the researcher. Lavallée (2009) honoured this reality by creating her own symbols to represent her view of the whole to honour "the connectedness of the stories, the threads of connection" (p. 33).

Rejoining with my methodologies and methods as given, I am reminded of Rancière's (2013) description of aesthetic experience as a process of "redistribution of the sensible," wherein dominant regimes of perception are unsettled *and* restructured. My reading of the literature (Phillips, 2024), as an aesthetic and ethical practice, embodied this sense in calling for educators and learners, including myself, to engage with Indigenous perspectives not as passive observers but as ethically implicated participants in a reconstituted social and educational lifeworld that includes our spirit worlds. My methodological theorizing attempted to describe the relational gaps in westernized knowledge systems, calling on myself to embrace spirit as a necessary epistemological and ethical force and animate relative needed to see, feel, and act towards expanded care for each other and the more-than-human (Phillips, 2025a). This is a direct movement against epistemic violence, in which non-western forms of knowing, particularly those embedded in Indigenous and relational epistemologies, are systematically marginalized (Spivak, 2013). My own work towards re-learning relationality—including kinship with the more-than-human—challenges the dominant colonial partition of the sensible (Rancière, 2004) which has historically excluded non-human and spirit(ual) entities from the realm of legitimate knowledge.

I realize, however, that while I no longer identify as a settler, I am still enmeshed in settler colonial lifeworlds, including a related education and aesthetico-political vocabulary. I am kin — with other humans and the more-than — but I am also in search of kinship, and in the process of re-inspiriting my lacunae of spirit. I thus built into my research design a further relational journey in answering my research questions — I would not do so alone.

My search for an Indigenous artist willing and able to collaborate with me towards re-materializing me and my participants' data into an alternative data platform lasted for more than a year. I was lucky enough to eventually connect with Two-Spirit Red River Métis artist Jordyn Hendricks, with ties to the St. Laurent and The Pas territories of Manitoba. Hendricks' work and relationship to place resonated with my own: they do not map onto colonial notions of gender; they are a student at OCAD University where I studied and used to teach, and they live most of their lives between Ottawa and Toronto, where I have likewise been in transience between in

spirit and flesh. Their work was also interdisciplinary in terms of media and potential registers of the sensorial, as Jordyn has worked in drawing, painting, sculpture/installation, performance, and traditional craft processes. In my next and final section, I report on our collaboration together: to not just illustrate the data, but to work through arts-based methods and thinking to conceptualize and re-imagine what the relationality of my, my participants', Jordyn's, and our collective experience of our data could become in aesthetic materialization.

Threading it All Together: Relearning Data

Recalling Lussier's (2021) capitulation to academic conventions, I found myself in a similar situation. Life not only finds a way, but it does not obey the ostensibly placid and gentile timelines of the academy; I had lost time to health crises and the degradation of my own spirit through academic cruelty and exploitation. Living as a student below the poverty line, as I had done for my whole life, was no longer sustainable. Having incurred thousands of dollars of unexpected and uninsured (by either my student or part-time faculty unions) medical expenses, I realized that my hopes to survive into my older age, never mind adopt and start a family as a queer person, was receding very quickly into the heteropatriarchal neoliberal futurities of Ottawa and its university, in which I was not included. Given the quickly destabilizing geopolitical climate in which democracy was in its death throes and human rights were being flayed away from governments and institutions, I needed to escape my precarious academic class status. Yet, I could not let go of the ethical impulse to still honour the relationality of my data.

I was required by the enduring colonial logics of the university to represent my thinking and data in written manuscript form, while the arts-based materialization of my data as an alternative form of disseminating and teaching through relational data was not required — and, more importantly, not supported (or cared for) by the institution. I had also lost my only Indigenous committee member; she had decided to move on to a different institution to escape the systemic anti-Indigenous racism still rampant at the University of Ottawa and abdicated all committee responsibilities in the process. Meanwhile, I was bleeding savings just to stay afloat. But I had Jordyn.

As part of my original research design, I approached many Indigenous artists towards collaborating on the materialization of my findings and creating a relationally ethical space of data dissemination that was not extractive and did not re-enfold my data, as given, into a colonial symbology or institutional frame of ownership. Over the span of 1.5 years, I reached out to both

visual/material artists and digital/time-based media artists who were already working in virtual spaces or electronic media. I further reached out to Indigenous data visualization or otherwise VR/interface designers and/or firms owned and operated by Indigenous technology experts. While I had some enthusiastic responses, all but one artist did not have the time or resources to spare on such a potentially expansive project.

As I was working on my literature review and methodological frameworks, I was reminded of my time at OCAD University: first as a student (and then valedictorian and Governor General's Medal winner) and then as contract faculty. During my master's, I became part of the then-new Indigenous Visual Culture (IVC) Program community. Specifically, I joined the Bead and Read circle and brought in my readings from my master's Indigenous Knowledges in Education course while learning to beadweave and, eventually, lead the circle and teach the craft. I remembered my fondness for OCAD and its students in particular. After some time and reaching out to various offices, I was finally able to connect with an undergraduate student in the IVC program. Their name is Jordyn Hendricks, a Two-Spirit Red River Métis artist with ties to the St. Laurent and The Pas areas of Manitoba.

Initially, our work was focused on establishing an institutionally necessary contract for our collaboration. My priorities for this contract were to make sure Jordyn's voice and labour were properly compensated and honoured in the future. Along the way, we both realized that all the evolving clauses were implicating a significant amount of collaborative work on both sides of the contract — as well as lingering questions of conceptual agency. Because of the constraints of my own timeline and that Jordyn was entering the third year of their program — typically a very intensive year for an art undergraduate at OCAD — I realized that I had to make some pragmatic decisions. At first, it seemed like my only option would be to either extend my time as a student or postpone the arts-based collaboration with Jordyn and so the materialization of the alternative dissemination platform. However, through our conversations, I realized that there was another option: bifurcating the thesis so that some arts-based collaboration could still be undertaken on the conceptual side of the thesis and then continued into a fuller materialization of the findings post-PhD. This would further maintain a critical relational umbilical between the theorizing/writing of the thesis, the data, the interpretation and conceptualization stemming from the data, and its future sharing as relational data in its own right. This further, as it turned out, resolved the tension between contracting an Indigenous artist to do work that implicated the need

to exceed colonial relational limitations of contractual relationships — that is, Jordyn became active in the conceptualizing of the 'output' of the research through arts-based practices and verbal and textual discussions, rather than simply the illustrator of my intentions.

Taking place between December 2024 and January of 2025, I called this work our 'winter work.' I provided Jordyn with a smaller contract of a bank of hours and a material budget to spend some preliminary time reading through and sit with my participants' datasets, including some of their publications, the interview transcripts, some of their newer work and my relational data portraits (discussed shortly). Jordyn and I met virtually several times during this process to first discuss and then sketch out non-determining conceptual sketches of how the data might be materialized in a gallery space, as a whole, including what kinds of materials, processes, and sensorial vocabularies they might employ. We further discussed how my relationality and understanding would intertwine with Jordyn's. Given my experience as an artist and art educator, I further provided some generative feedback; for example, thinking of having real soil, perhaps even the soil from the garden of the scholar whose data was being materialized, instead of just having it represented on a 2D surface. This also allowed us to push and pull ideas of how all the datasets could be put into relation.

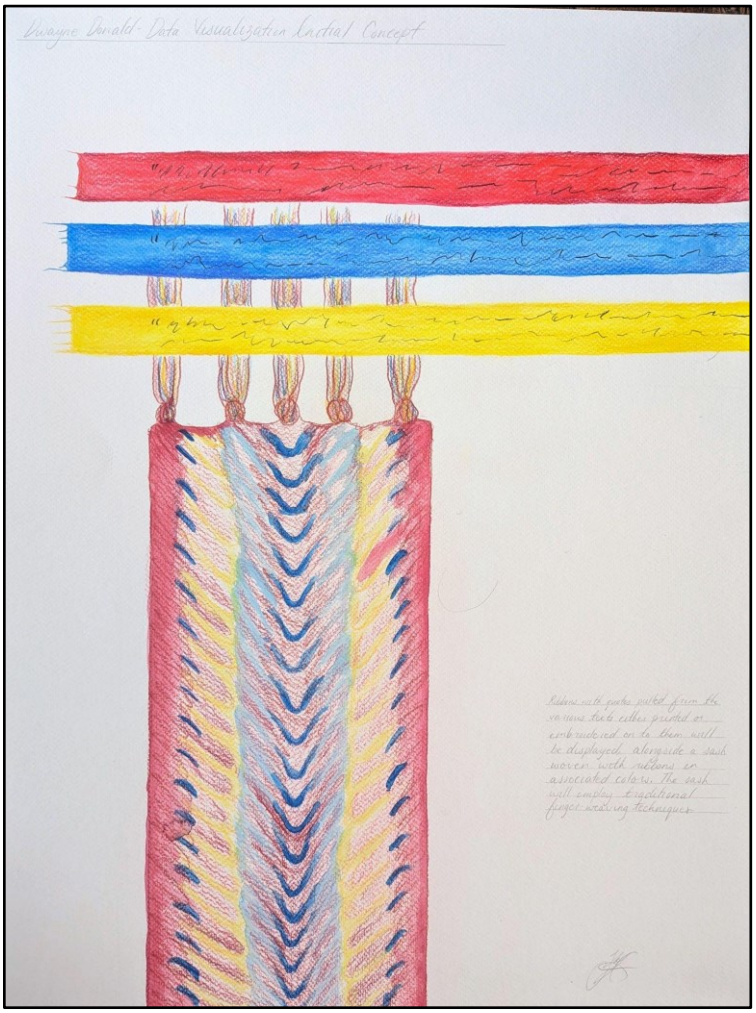
Because this bifurcation and new work was not previously discussed with my participants, I immediately felt the ethical relational responsibility and opportunity to check in with each scholar. I reached out to each participant and updated them on the status of my project and invited them to engage with me in an informal conversation about how their data was being honoured through my collaboration with Jordyn as well as how their thinking might have changed since we first spoke during the official interviews. This proved to then be a highly relational and, I believe, validating process for my dissertation. Because most of my participants were First Nations or Métis and invited as experts in the topic area and underlying concepts, this checking-in process further allowed an internal validation process of how I (as a non-Indigenous scholar) was engaging with their knowledges in respectful and non-extractive ways.

I discuss the findings of this winter work and validating process as an open-ended conclusion. I weave in connections between and across my datasets, as well as discuss the futurities that these representations suggest or even make imaginatively possible. Important to note is that these are not illustrations, plans, or considered by Jordyn or myself to be finished 'pieces' of art. They are conceptual. They are not meant to determine what the final

materializations will look like, but to be arts-based extensions of our theorizing. These representations move through each data set and into the imagined physical space of the final whole, the work of which is tentatively planned for the spring and summer months of 2025, with the hope of an exhibition in Ottawa in the fall of 2025. I share minimal interpretations here to resist the colonial urge to analyze and extract. I attempt to provide insights from the minds of the human beings involved, rather than explain what they mean, *per se*. I welcome my reader/viewer to consider how these representations might relate to their own thinking.

Figure 38

Winter Work: Dwayne Donald by Jordyn Hendricks in conversation with Patrick Phillips



Note: *Dwayne Donald Data Visualization Initial Concept* by Jordyn Hendricks, 2024. Watercolour and pencil on watercolour paper, 46 x 61 cm. Hendricks's notation: Ribbons with quotes from the various texts either printed or embroidered onto them will be displayed,

alongside a sash woven with ribbons in associated colours. The sash will employ traditional fingerweaving techniques.

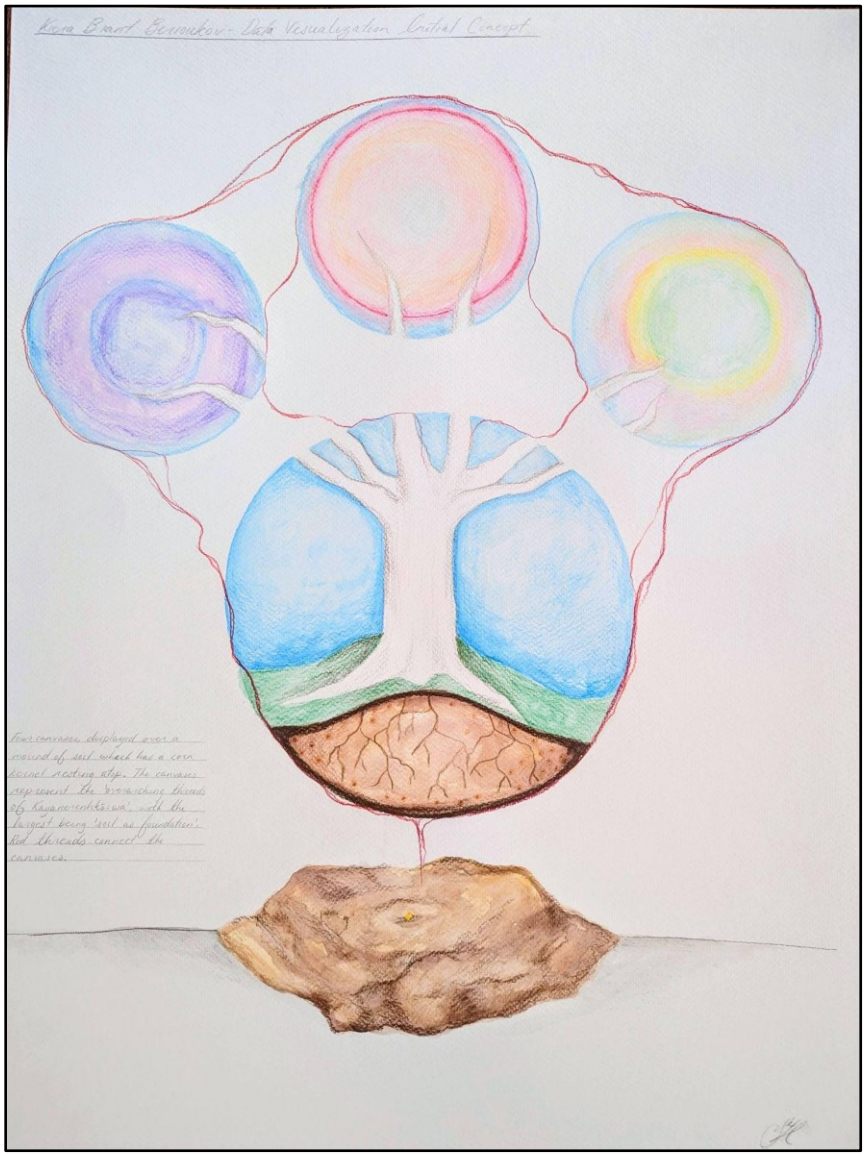
Figure 38 is a visualization of Jordyn's preliminary plans to create a materialization of Dwayne Donald's dataset. It represents a piece of fingerweaving that rematerializes the meaning of métissage from Donald's earlier work on Indigenous métissage and how Jordyn sees its ethos running through Donald's work. Métis fingerweaving is, as the name suggests, a Métis craft of weaving threads or fibres with fingers. The technique is traditionally used to create the Métis Sash, a multivalent and practical object with deep historical and contemporary significance across Métis cultures and communities, as well as one that connects Métis Peoples to First Nations and early Francophone/Voyageur relationships and knowledges. This represents a written concept in embodied connection to the material world. It also returns across the temporality of Donald's data as given (cf. Phillips, 2025a): he has shared with me that he would write about his most influential theories differently (e.g., 2009, 2011, 2016) if he were to do so today. In particular, through our conversations during our winter-work check-ins, he shared that my prompting has caused him to think about how in his own work he sometimes unintentionally neglects the dimension of spirit and the more-than-human world, and that other scholars have perhaps propagated this bias through citing his words as complete wisdom. Yet, spirit is real, animate, sovereign, and in the world with us, including materially.

Jordyn's colour choices are at the moment placeholders. However, the core concept of materialization is in itself highly and relationally generative. As Donald has stated many times over the years in writing, speaking, teaching, and in personal communication with me and other non-Indigenous students, if we are to realize the transformation and change as human beings — including nations, educational institutions, and all that stems from them — we must consider how we could be and do differently. In this case, Jordyn's choice to relate directly to their Métis identity materialized this lesson by interpreting Donald's dataset differently and through perhaps some forgotten implications of Donald's earlier work on Indigenous métissage (2012), which stresses a careful relational weaving (in writing) approach to research respectful of the people(s), places, and temporal conditions of the research; here, Jordyn returns this oft-cited (in text in research articles) concept but re-materializes it back to the material weaving metaphor from which it originates and reminds all involved of its materiality. Although Indigenous métissage does not derive from Métis fingerweaving or the word 'Métis' itself, both share an ancestral

etymology with the originally derogatory colonial notion of being ‘mixed’ and therefore not ‘pure.’ Both practices, however, reorient hierarchizing notions of hybridity/purity into the meeting of worldviews and spirits that creates a new and existentially distinct whole independent of but in active resistance to colonial limitations of relationship (see Andersen, 2014). Donald (personal communication, 11 April 2025) shared similar understandings of the praxial potential of Jordyn’s work and gave it his blessing to unfold. Jordyn will have to learn fingerweaving — which transforms the typical assumption that progress means looking forward. Because they are open to considering but exceeding traditional colour or pattern choices, Jordyn further challenges assumptions that traditional knowledges are static. In a way, Jordyn’s conceptualizing resonates with my own impulse to focus on the weaving of so much implication of wisdom, including Donald’s. As other participants have shared, researching, sharing knowledge, and teaching in ways that exceed colonial limitations does not have to be so abstract. I can be as real and tactile as the practices we show up for and gift our data and presence to. I am presently imagining that we might ask Donald for fibres or other thread-like material from his communities’ lands — perhaps even plant fibres as were used before European textiles were introduced, or textiles that Donald’s Papaschase Cree and Blackfoot relatives use.

Figure 39

Winter Work: Kiera Brant-Birioukov by Jordyn Hendricks in conversation with Patrick Phillips



Note. Kiera Brant-Birioukov Data Visualization Initial Concept by Jordyn Hendricks, 2024. Watercolour and pencil on watercolour paper, 46 x 61 cm. Hendricks's notation: Four canvases, displayed over a mound of soil which has a corn kernel resting atop. The canvases represent the overarching threads of kanenhstóhare, with the largest being 'soil as foundation.' Red threads connect the canvases.

Figure 39 is Jordyn's conceptual sketch as inspired by our conversations around Kiera Brant-Birioukov's datasets. Jordyn once again interpreted Brant-Birioukov's dataset through a different vision — yet we kept both of our thinking entangled and later validated this conceptual

materialization with Brant-Birioukov. It is presently still an intermediate representation of what Brant-Birioukov's data might be materialized as in a gallery space, with three circular canvases on a wall and a mound of soil underneath. A real kernel of corn sits within a depression in the soil, as if about to be planted.

This iteration of our winter work allowed a significant relational exchange between Jordyn and me. Jordyn's original idea did not have physical soil or corn. I suggested that we might have real soil to emphasize the importance of the soil, as alive and real and knowledge in itself, as per Brant-Birioukov's (2022) theorizing and practice. And, of course, the centrality of corn as teacher — compared to my data portrait (Fig. 36). Indeed, when I checked in with Brant-Birioukov in January, she concurred with my impulse to reinvest the work with the centrality of corn. We also discussed the ambiguity of the circular canvases in terms of visual vocabulary, and how future discussions including Jordyn might help to make these canvases more purposeful and concrete (e.g. perhaps being less tentative and more direct as I had been in my data portraits). Between these conversations, Jordyn built relationally on my idea of having real soil towards the possibility of having soil from Brant-Birioukov's garden in her home territory, where she grew the corn that she learned from and with during her dissertation work. Brant-Birioukov further built on this idea by offering some of the dried corn kernels she has kept from that very growing season, from her thesis. Given that the world and even Brant-Birioukov's life is in flux — she has intentionally extricated herself from the academy to pursue being an independent scholar and consultant and so escape the commodification of her indigeneity by the academy — it makes ethical sense for the visual vocabulary of this dataset to be somewhat tentatively in flux.

Figure 40

Winter Work: Lisa Howell by Jordyn Hendricks in conversation with Patrick Phillips

Note. Lisa Howell Data Visualization Initial Concept by Jordyn Hendricks, 2024. Watercolour and pencil on watercolour paper, 46 x 61 cm. Hendricks's notation: Three stylized figures dancing & lively filling the frame. Entirely in pink, vibrant, representing the maternal womb. Line connecting the three belly buttons — generational significance.

Figure 40 visualizes a conceptual starting point for materializing Lisa Howell's data. This tentatively represents a large painting, up to perhaps 244 by 122 cm. Intentionally using a landscape format for a figurative representation, this painting would depict various kinds of bodies, some typically coded as female but some suggesting trans bodies. Less distinct bodies would comprise the background, allowing various gender-coded embodiments to coexist and intertwine with what is a primarily maternal visual language: the belly button and umbilical. The colours of the piece would be pink — but perhaps even neon/hot pink in the case of the interconnecting thread/umbilical.

Here, Jordyn found a thread that I had been trying to represent: how is Lisa understanding herself as not the same but not out of kinship with this place and its First Peoples? Jordyn noticed more readily than I did the importance of the belly button and the teachings surrounding it as

discussed by Howell in her dissertation (2022). This caused me to reflect on my data portrait, and how I felt the only thing that unified it was indeed the threads (or umbilicals) of spirit interconnecting each relational symbol. Jordyn and I discussed how the pink thread/umbilical could become three dimensional and extend off the canvas into the gallery space — and perhaps connect with other pieces. I recalled the belly button teachings as discussed by Dwayne Donald in our first conversation and as I represented it, but in his data's context attached to a typically masculine symbol. The idea of using hot pink resonated with my queerness and Jordyn's Two Spirit experience — although neither of us are particularly fond of pink or hot pink, the colour is a powerful symbol of queering material culture. The choice to create a landscape-format painting composed of gender-fluid femininity reconfigures the masculinist western tradition of painting landscapes as passive subjects ripe for patriarchal fertilization and subjugation.

When I shared this conceptual visualization with Howell in January 2025, it immediately resonated with her and our conversation around her current practice. She shared that what is her most prioritized work is her teaching, and how to teach from the belly button. In particular, she is presently in the process of relearning how to be someone who speaks from the belly button — so that she can model this with her students and teacher students. The centrality of the belly button and thread began to resonate across our datasets, bringing into intimacy the data shared with other participants — all participants. Howell expressed profound excitement and joy for seeing this preliminary piece in and of itself, and reinforced the future wish that we all come together and discuss our data in its future materialization.

Figure 41

Winter Work: Jennifer Tupper by Jordyn Hendricks in conversation with Patrick Phillips

Note. Jennifer Tupper — Data Visualization Initial Concept by Jordyn Hendricks, 2024. Watercolour and pencil on watercolour paper, 46 x 61 cm. Hendricks's notation: Tupper's stories framed on wall, displayed using visual imagery described in stories alongside text. Below the paintings is a plinth with paper atop, inviting viewers to participate in their own 'settler life writing' process. Red threads connect the frames.

Figure 41 is a visualization of a tentative plan for materializing Jennifer Tupper's data, as an output of my conversations with Jordyn and in transit across the different kinds of data, including my own initial interpretations. Instead of the centrality of the bison skull, Jordyn proposes here a set of textual excerpts from Tupper's (2020) settler life writing. These would be printed onto canvases but also spoken aloud by Tupper in a looping recording. A red plinth prompts viewers to start their own settler life writing, should they choose to, and to reflect on why they might not want to. Red threads appear yet are tentatively frayed around the frames of printed text.

Jordyn and I are presently still conceptualizing the materiality of this piece. We have had several iterative discussions on scale and form. The centrality of the buffalo skull in my data portrait is in a liminal state; this image became central to my visualization of Tupper's work because of its touchstone significance in Tupper's life writing but also its potential resonance with Tupper's verbally referenced but undescribed spiritual experiences she has been privileged to through her work with Elders and in ceremony. This privatization of spirit has emerged as a significant concern for myself and my participants as I have checked in with them. While there are important aspects of protocol and respect for ceremony that is incommensurate with academic reporting, the danger of leaving spirit as a private experience means we do not discuss it or teach around it, and so do not develop a representational vocabulary to relate spirit amongst ourselves. I am tentatively thinking that the red threads could form more rigid frames around the text, in a sense creating a boundary of relationality that is not quite open yet. I have with Jordyn pushed and pulled with the idea of how the red threads, having now emerged as a critical and connecting element across our collective data, should still connect Tupper to other pieces. This is despite Tupper in her published work still being tentative about her settler identity and potential for re-learning beyond simply being unsettled. In conversation, however, I can feel the compassion and passion for doing so.

As I discuss around the final figures of this paper (Fig. 43 to 45), I realize that the buffalo skull and the gears (representing the academic grind) may still be materialized at the interstices between the pieces in real space.

Figure 42

Winter Work: Jennifer Markides by Jordyn Hendricks in conversation with Patrick Phillips

Note. Jennifer Markides — Data Visualization Initial Concept by Jordyn Hendricks, 2024. Watercolour and pencil on watercolour paper, 46 x 61 cm. Hendricks's notation: "I travel to & from our plant relatives, animal relatives, the land, the water, & the cosmos." Visualizing these

planes, with amorphic shapes indirectly representing plant & animal life. Red spirit line connecting throughout.

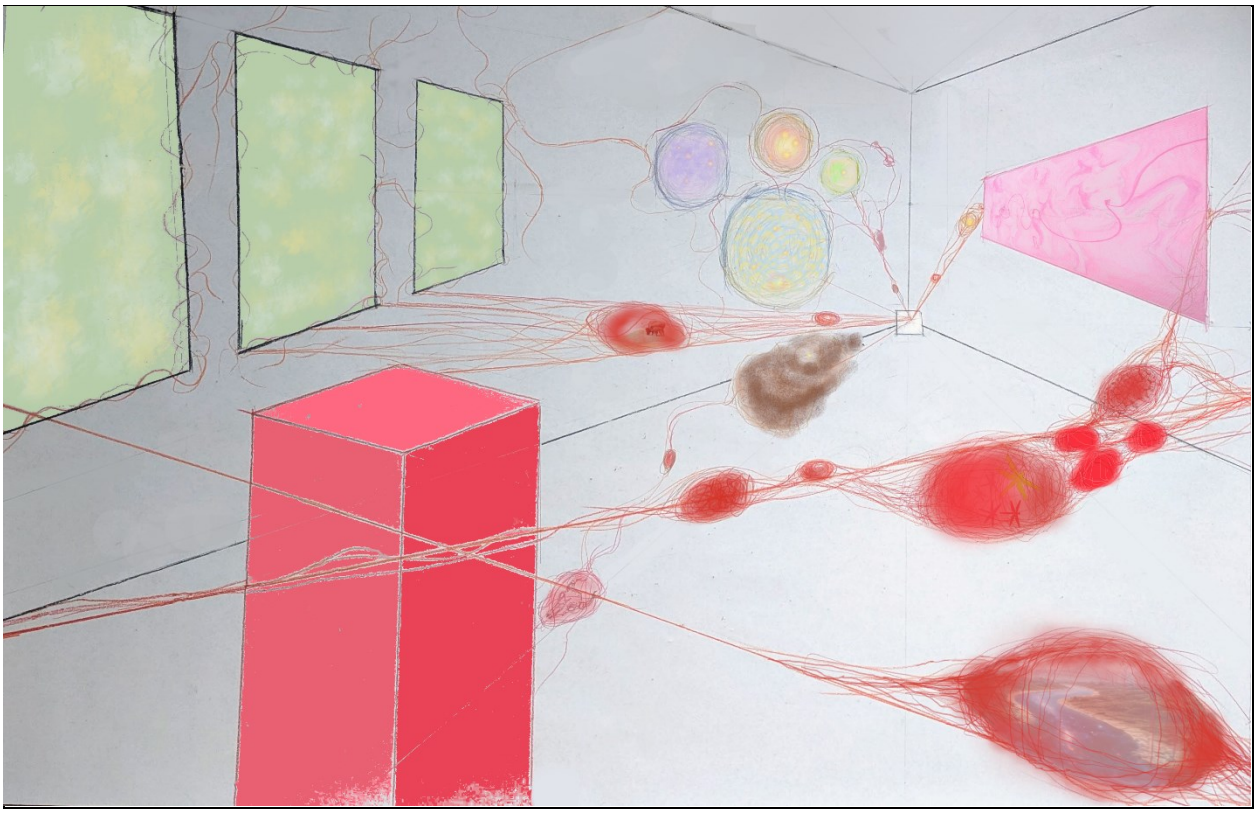
Figure 42 depicts a conceptual sketch for a painting by Jordyn towards materializing Jennifer Tupper's dataset. Here, Jordyn's reading and mine align very well, and I believe the collaboration has greatly amplified the relational meaning of Markides's data as materialized.

Here, Jordyn retains almost all of the core visual elements of my data portrait: a river, animal forms, and a connection between Earth and the cosmos. Jordyn's material and visual thinking iteration addressed a problem I had not yet articulated for myself: how to represent such a vast diversity of form and nation of animal and plant life? Jordyn resolved this by experimenting with amorphous forms that could suggest many different species or forms of life, both physically and spiritually animate. Similarly, Jordyn blends water, sky, earth, and cosmos into a single flowing gradient. Uniting all elements of the piece is a single thread — which I wonder might be a galactic thread or filament, the largest observable structure in the universe, according to western science. In my conversations with Markides, this resonates with her perspectives of thinking transversely and relationally — even reconciliatory, at least epistemologically — across knowledges and teaching traditions, from First Nations, Inuit, Métis and European traditions like Montessori.

Jordyn has expressed that they are most excited about this concept because of the resonance of the red thread across our data sets, but particularly Markides's writing and Jordyn's kindred experience as a Métis person.

Figure 43

Winter Work: Approximation of the Future Relational Data Publication as a Gallery Space



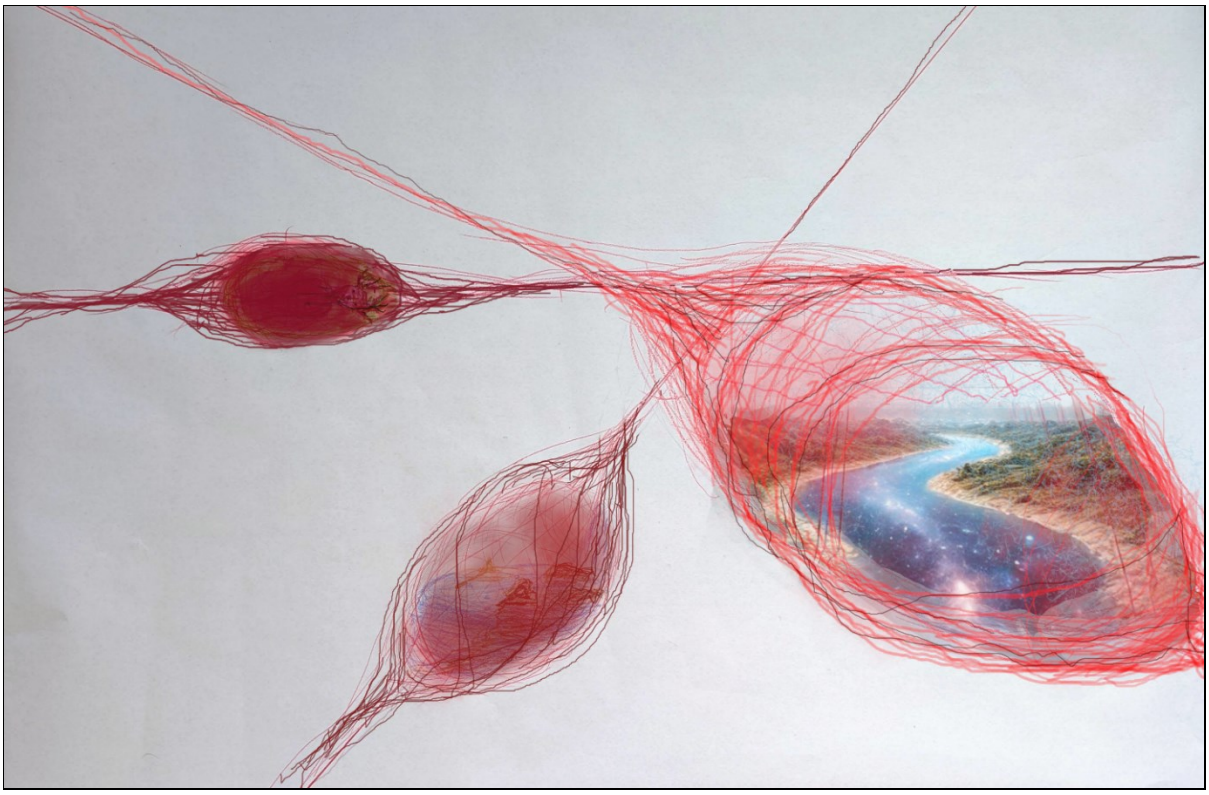
Note. Sketch of future exhibition by the author. Pencil and some digital painting on paper, approx. 61 x 91 cm.

Figure 43 very loosely illustrates the potential materialization of interconnecting spirit — relationality — between each materialized dataset in a future gallery space. Jordyn and I have tentatively decided that red threads will be present in all and physically interconnect each piece or set of pieces. These relational spirit thread networks and bundles present an opportunity for my own visual art remembering — of my own visual art practice from my OCAD undergraduate honours thesis. In this work, I created an interdisciplinary and multimedia installation practice in which I would materialize the potential life within spaces that would otherwise be left invisible. I would populate old vitrines and later create my own containers to inspirit with my cosmologies of visual and material vocabularies that responded to the spaces themselves, and made connections between these bodies. In conversation with Jordyn, I realized that my idea of relational lacunae (Phillips, 2025a), and how relational lacunae are themselves constituted of our own perceptual affordances of relationality, could be materialized literally in the spaces between

Jordyn's works. Presently, I envision asymmetrical, ovoid containers or pods embedded in and supported by the relational threads running through the future gallery space. These would appear more opaque the further they are found from Jordyn's works and more transparent the closer they are to each dataset materialization. As they become more transparent and so allow viewers to see inside them, these lacunae would reveal intricate dioramas of symbology and materiality, as loosely approximated in Figure 44. As the threads and/or bundles of threads intersect space while also suspending each lacuna, they might further interrupt the fixity or otherwise typical understanding of an art exhibit as a collection of fixed and separate pieces. Viewers would need to navigate amongst the threads and intersecting aggregates of threads and lacunae, suggesting that the relationships that connect ostensibly separate representation are as integral as the individualized data sets.

Figure 44

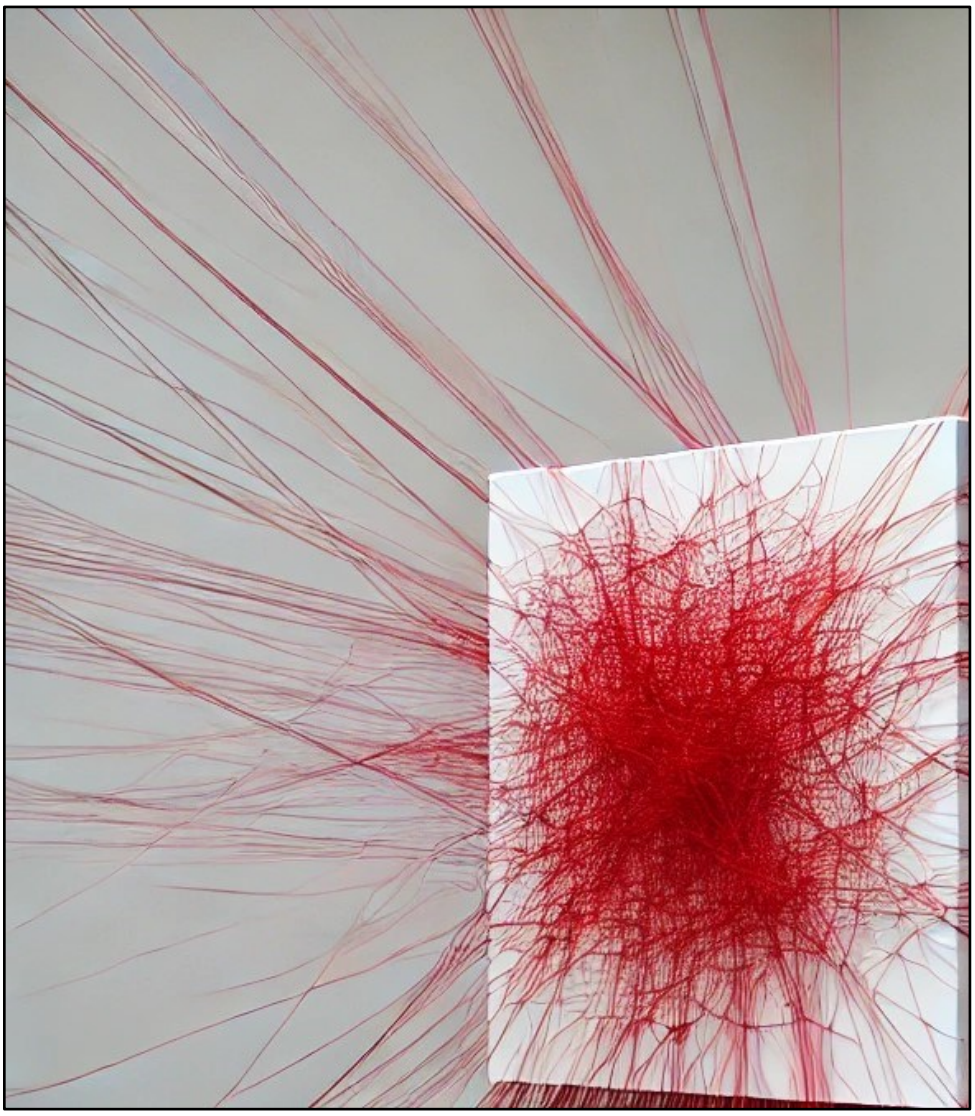
Winter Work: Approximation of What a Lacunae Could Look Like as They Appear Closer to the Artworks of the Installation



Note. 'Lacunae' becoming more transparent or more opaque the closer or further away they are from each of Jordyn Hendrick's mounted pieces. Patrick Phillips, pencil and digital painting on paper, approx. 61 x 91cm.

Figure 45

Winter Work: Patrick's Concept Sketch of a Conceptual Collaboration Between Jordyn Hendricks



Note. An approximation of what the small piece Jordyn proposed during our winter work would look like in collaboration with my idea of how it might link to and inform the whole collection as an interconnected whole. See also its inclusion in Figure 43 for a sense of scale. Mixed media and digital painting.

Figure 45 is my approximation of a piece Jordyn hopes to create and that I hope to collaborate on in its materiality and relationship to the whole of the gallery space/collection of materialized data sets. Here, Jordyn has proposed a small abstract painting of red threads on a small white square canvas. This piece would attend to and honour the meaning of the red thread

as an entity of meaning in its/their own right. It would also honour the spirit of our materializing of our data and offer a materialization of a lasting hope: that the viewers might see our arts-based acts of inspiriting as a likewise inspiriting of our representational repertoires. I have proposed that this piece could be placed in and propped up against a corner of the gallery space. Iterating in conversation, I have further suggested that, from the two-dimensional surface of the canvas, real read threads could emanate from this small piece and in fact be the source of the relational network of threads running through and interconnecting the whole space.

Moving forward through space, time, and place, Jordyn and I plan to continue our collaboration through the summer and fall of 2025. I hope to secure some form of institutional funding, while Jordyn hopes to find Ontario Arts Council funding towards their learning of fingerweaving, finding a gallery space, and other material support. Our hope is to realize a relational knowledge dissemination platform as a gallery exhibition within the spaces of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education. Further ahead, I hope to develop this approach across times, spaces, and places that could benefit from the transformative potential offered through such representation and sharing of knowledge as given in relational spirit. I hope for our future exhibition to also be a prototype pedagogical resource of sorts — in that it could be used by teacher educators and teachers to learn about concepts like truth and reconciliation that include the full complexity of its relational calls for us to become better relatives — to become kin.

In the process, I hope to further address (including through future writing for teacher education audiences) what are perhaps some stray threads across my dissertation work. These include most notably notions of place and the pragmatic pedagogical call I hear and try to articulate each day of my life: how do we teach teachers and by extension future learners how to *care*?

As I conclude the institutional requirements of my dissertation work within a prototyping but mostly conceptualizing phase, I presently mean to keep myself open to how different viewers (including teacher candidates and their professors) might call spirit into their own meaning-making of the future materialization of my participants', collaborator's, and my own entangled data. In my own practice, I already attempt to open students' perceptual repertoires through Indigenous literatures (that is, fiction and nonfiction beyond academic texts), visual and material cultures, music, and more. However, so far, these experiences have been largely contained and

so conditioned within the curricular walls of seminar classrooms and course website modules. As the foundation for a more relationally expansive pedagogy of Truth and Reconciliation, I can imagine several pedagogical approaches that could be woven into a future, fully materialized exhibition:

- Teacher candidates might be prompted to articulate their own meaning-making as experienced through their embodied presence within the exhibition space. Such prompts could be intentionally open to and caring of teacher candidates' honest and affective responses to what they have read via official curricula and course materials by asking teacher candidates to attend to what meanings come to and from them that are not necessarily mandated by texts/readings or typical discussion prompts, including what they might not yet feel they can or should articulate.
- Assessment of any assigned work for teacher candidates, in relation to the proposed materialized exhibition, if desired, could be intentionally and similarly opening by facilitating a much broader repertoire of options, including arts/creation-based, collaborative, community, and other responses that resist re-orienting Truth and Reconciliation into a standardized and masterable topic evidenced in a single, complete output of teacher education (and so future teaching).
- Rather than typical teacher education events in which Indigenous community members or teacher candidates come in or are called upon in class to be experts, the facilitation of reciprocal, collaborative viewings of the exhibition could be part of a pedagogy of worldview comparison and generative exchange. Such exchange could be highly granular and relationally expansive, in that it could include not only young and Elder Indigenous community members or teacher candidates alongside typical settler teachers, but also racialized non-Indigenous, new immigrant, disabled, queer, and all possible subjectivities in a shared conversation. Such conversations might also be cross-community and cross-disciplinary, in that family of teacher candidates and disciplinary (i.e., 'teachable subject') experts could contribute to a conversation that truly demonstrates how Truth and Reconciliation is neither past-tense nor simply or ethically containable in a content area such as social science or history, or on a single day such as Orange Shirt Day.

While my reader has no doubt noticed that I have not used the word ‘spirit’ within any of the above listed points, I maintain that I cannot alone profess to know or advise on a universal pedagogic strategy for circularizing spirit for Truth and Reconciliation teacher education, as I cannot claim to know all students’ spirits or how they might be or could be in relation to spirit. Such a pedagogy would need to be genuinely felt through by the community in which the future exhibition or other materialized resource might find itself. A first and expansively generative gesture would be a culturally, conceptually, and materially welcome into discussing it within educational spaces to begin with — lest classroom spaces continue to deny the relationally-rich places in which they are so often imposed.

Indeed, I envision that the materialization of data in such a way would become a space inspirited by those who come to find (either intentionally or through pedagogy in such a space) relation with the data that it offers, and so become a place from which to find place more broadly, from the micro-local to the macro-global. What these pedagogies might look like in practice would need to continually change across space, place, and time — and not necessarily linearly. My hope is that future teachers and their students will carry the relational lessons of such a resource and pedagogy through into their lives, across all moments of potential relational perception, from the taste of a strawberry connecting a learner to the Sun and Earth to feeling through the complex ethical relational implications of an engineering project.

I am presently in a position in which I do not know what ’place’ I will or can call home in the future. While a relational place study has been central to my theorizing from the lands now known as Ottawa, I have had to excise it from my methodological documentation, lest it overwhelm my audience — within the readerly expectations of an academic text as a space of communication and dissemination of knowledge. While I will continue this place study and attempt is materialization/publication in future, do wonder, however, returning to my literature review work (Phillips, 2024) and the epigraphs that frame this manuscript: might we still be able to put ourselves into relation with texts and archives of data as places, and so embody all attending ethical relational and kinship responsibilities? After all, so-called land-based education is being re-enfolded into colonial curricula (D. Donald, personal communication, 16 December 2024). In the micro-local contexts of where I am presently writing from, land-based education programs are predominantly and highly exclusive to the offspring of privileged civil servants. Further, we run the risk of romanticizing, essentializing, binarizing, and ultimately making

exclusive relations to place if we ignore the spirit and relationships that always surround us, even in our built environments and virtual spaces, including our inner worlds of thought and feeling (a mereological understanding of data, including digitized data, allows for complex axiologies that do not divide matter from energy or information from spirit). We cannot continue promoting privatized, neoliberal experiences of the more-than-human in places deemed curricularly pure or led by elevated individuals of elderly wisdom, lest we continue to return to our settler colonial lifeways afterwards and remain perceptually disabled of the relationality of the totality of our shared existence: relationality, its spirit and intersubjective entangling ethics, is once again 'out there' and out of reach. Perhaps we might begin teaching towards ethical and kinship caring beyond our private interests through inspiriting the spaces we already move through. These might include our archives, which include our manuscripts, institutions, ecological environments, classrooms, and bodies, where we already believe contain wisdom and knowledge of most worth. If we are afforded the accommodation of multiple, human sensorial ways of experiencing and sharing this knowledge, we might further realize how to care about the same relational knowledge and spirit radiating in, out, and constituting all of us as kin.

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Chapter 5

Towards Inspiriting Research: Reflections on Data, Truth, and Reconciliation

> Strong winds and cold greeted Dwayne Donald and his students as they climbed to the top of the hill at Ribstones, an Aboriginal heritage site located outside of Viking, Alberta. Coloured ribbon, braids and offerings of tobacco surrounded the area, and despite a white metal fence, there was a strong sense that this is a sacred place.
> (Ford, 2010, para. 1)

> [The distant origin of the Altar Stone] is consistent with recent interpretations of Stonehenge as a monument whose builders attempted — ultimately unsuccessfully — to establish some form of political unification and shared identity across much or even all of Britain, bringing together these extraordinary and alien rocks which symbolised and embodied far and distant communities within a complex material and monumental expression of unity between people, land, ancestors and the heavens.
> (Pearson et al., 2024, p. 132)

Points of Reflection on Truth, Reconciliation, Data, and Education

When I first read Dwayne Donald's work (e.g., 2009, 2012) at a time that now feels a lifetime past yet vividly of the present, I was deeply moved — I felt that the insights he offered through his words included me as part of its potential futurities of truth and redress, despite me being non-Indigenous to Turtle Island. The same wisdoms were then refracted through wider truth and reconciliation discourse and foundational decolonial theory texts, and through the authority of my PhD professors. The ethical relational world Donald called my spirit into might have required a great deal of work to glean into, but seemed to perpetually recede, perhaps never to be — for me — within reach. At the time, I felt a kind of dissonance between his words, simultaneously: theorizing relationality through the rarified westernized vocabularies of curriculum studies; translating (to respectfully share) Cree and Blackfoot teachings that provoked the limitations of westernized notions of relationships and education; and gesturing (in academic publications) towards the existence of and inextricable ethical responsibilities towards a vast more-than-human world of relatives — of kin.

I wondered, at first, if that the dissonance rang out from within a core limitation of myself, as I had been schooled by dominant EDID and otherwise (perhaps ironically dominant) decolonizing education to understand myself as an "uninvited guest" on unceded Algonquin

"territory": a white settler whose existence and presence on Turtle Island was always-already an ethical transgression. Consequently, I wondered as I wandered through the logical extensions of a wealth of ostensibly decolonial discourse, including much Truth and Reconciliation teacher education discourse, if 'uninvited' would always mean *unwelcome*. Such is the logical extension of much educational theory and practiced teacher education curriculum in which non-Indigenous peoples are told to remain in perpetual states of unlearning, of intentionally inhospitable unsettling. Voided of any welcome into (or curriculum of) ethical *relearning*, much decolonial discourse and teacher education curricula leave only one ostensible ethical recourse open for non-Indigenous educators and students: to retreat back into the colonial fort and forever ruminate on their intrinsic and perceptually disabling non-indigeneity. Meanwhile, nominal settler life continues unchanged and even intensifies in its extraction of minds and environments. 'Unsettling' has become commodified as a colonial academic discursive resource as it works, as all colonial systems do, to maintain a hierarchizing denial of relationships. As I wandered across discourse and the physical places to which I had access, including what I now more affectionately (and I think ethically) call the lands which have traditionally *cared for* and continue to be *cared for by* the Algonquin Peoples, I realized the feeling of dissonant limitation was itself imposed via the same colonial worldviews that notions of relationships were being transfigured through. It was not that I, or any of my non-Indigenous teacher-students, could not find ethical relations with this or any place — rather we were limited in how we might re/present our relationships by the discursive repertoires afforded to us as particularized human beings, perhaps cast as natural by the teleology of relationally-flat and acritical deployment of settler colonial studies theory in education (see Chapter 2).

The result is that many, as ostensibly progressive education scholars, declare the linear necessity of having "truth and then reconciliation" (cf. Howell & Ng-A-Fook, 2023). Never mind that such a colonial temporal arrangement forgets the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC, 2015) calls: that truth and reconciliation are neither linear nor separable, and require a non-colonial understanding of time, relationships, and so truth itself. Most worrying to me, the actual healing and relational renewal and transformation of the TRC's calls never happens — and arguably our institutionalized, neoliberalized selves probably don't want reconciliation, because true/thful reconciliation implies not only researching and teaching in radically different ways, but also living and relating differently as humans with our more-than-

human kin. The crux of it is that realizing such relationality would make our neoliberal investments in accruing social and material capital moot, and the implications are difficult to accept within the futurities of power we still work towards. Our work and worth would not be measured in salaries, but the rewards and reciprocally extended gifts of building ethical relationships between all of our kin (cf. Wildcat, 2013). This is the true cause of fear so many and diverse folks have of not just decolonization but true resurgence of Indigenous ways of thinking-knowing-being: that we will lose our precious monetized possessions (real and imagined, including land, data, including spirit, including love), all of which yet flow from our shared bio-spirit-social sphere, but only (and only some) acknowledged as property and so font of extractable resources in practice, including research and teaching.

Before concluding my dissertation writing and a discussion of how my work offers an alternative re-learning curriculum for understanding complex relational 'subjects,' I next share a story about data, relationality, and how such notions come together to, perhaps, materialize spirit. Research subjects, then, include, but are not limited to, Truth and Reconciliation teacher education and the educators and students enacting such educational topics. However, I encourage us to consider how our data could be intersubjective entities of relationships we may need to relearn, particularly of spirit, and so spirit as kin calling us into relearning of relationships of and with. I suggest that returning to my epigraphs above may offer a concrete sense of the relational complexity I gesture towards in words and that, despite filling and exceeding a written PhD dissertation, such complexity need not be understood as particularly abstract but rather tangible.

Data Remembered as Inspirited and Inspiriting Kin

Donald's earlier published work (e.g., 2009) derivative of his doctoral dissertation is often cited for its articulation of key differences between Indigenous and settler colonial worldviews, particularly how they enable or disable human conceptions and perceptions of relationships. Synthesizing curriculum studies theorizing through and in contrast to the traditional teachings of his Papaschase Cree community and Kainai Blackfoot kin, Donald is still frequently cited for his onto-epistemological concept of the colonial fort and its logics: that settler colonial inscriptions on minds, bodies, land, professional and daily relationships maintain a denial of ethical relationships and so reconciliation of relationships between settler and Indigenous communities of Turtle Island. While this certainly still holds true, what is often left out of the proliferating quotations and paraphrases of Donald's work is the inextricable ethical

responsibility to the more-than-human — beyond simply mentioning "the more-than-human." Indeed, the human-to-human relationship quickly fills the discursive frame (still maintained as a colonial frame by most scholars) as scholars take up Donald's and others' work, as I have continually traced throughout my dissertation manuscripts. Few scholars recognize that Donald, which I am sure he will share if asked, was very much concerned with proving to the settler colonial academy that his ideas had merit — that he was playing the same language games (particularly those of curriculum studies). Even Donald has shared with me, through conversation as one of my project's research participants, that he himself had neglected in his earlier work, or otherwise left implicit, the more-than-human as part of relational ethics and renewal. And even as he has increasingly centred notions of kinship relationality, which likewise centres kindred relations between all entities, he has acknowledged that one important kin relation continues to be invisiblized in his praxis: *spirit*.

Traces of spirit are nevertheless still there, here, and everywhere — across Turtle Island as a landscape and in the places of onto-epistemological pilgrimage Donald's published works could (to me) easily be understood as (see Chapter 2). In particular, Donald's earliest work related relationality through attending to particular more-than-human relatives as animate and related spiritual entities — such as rocks. Donald (2009) clearly states that rocks, "as animate, as relatives, as spirits […] have their own stories to tell" (p. 13). This is not a metaphor when understood within an ethical relational worldview informed by ecological kinship, such as is the case, I would assert, for Indigenous worldviews but also is possible for any human being to access if given ethical relational care in research or pedagogy (see Chapter 3).

I must intervene on myself here to stress and not lose sight of the truth that across the history of our so-called commonwealth nation state, the human-to-human relationship has been highly asymmetrical and dehumanizing of Indigenous Peoples in particular — including within the most progressive universities; universities are indeed still forts. As Donald shared in 2010, "Some elders I know talk about all of the things that have happened to them since treaty 6 and 7 as our 'dark ages.' This era is still very recent and Aboriginal people are still recovering […] The idea of repatriation is really strong; language and ceremony are being repatriated. We need to be very awake for this, and we need time for this" (Ford, 2010, para. 5). Unsurprisingly then, Donald asserted in the same interview that "We must honour the ethical imperative of *human* relationality [emphasis added]" (Ford, 2010, para. 6). While students who visited the Viking

Ribstones on the day of that interview highlighted how they had been awakened to the existence and necessity of attending *spirit* (what it could mean, be, be re/represented as) as integral to Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in education, such discussions are rarely, if ever, elaborated on or centered in the literature to date (and indeed were not given words by Donald). Even in my first interviews with my research participants, 3 Indigenous and two non, the existence or even representation/non-abstraction of spirit and experience with it was difficult to materialize. Over further check-ins with my participants, we agreed that attending spirit is nevertheless necessary for truly truthful reconciliation. It is widely stated across the literature that what is sacred and what is spirit is inseparable from truth and reconciliation work, but I have found that honouring what that could be or mean for educators and students is left unrepresented, unhonoured, and privatized as an exclusive, neoliberal, individualized experience. Core to my thesis, however, is foregrounding spirit and its implications for relational work, including how it both might allow access to relationality (the relationality called for by scholars) and how it usefully complexifies notions of truth and reconciliation — inclusive of time as a nonlinear dimension of existence, and so truth and reconciliation as nonlinear. Neither linear is being Indigenous or non-Indigenous — being or otherwise becoming (see Paradies, 2020).

First known as *assinikospikeganit* in Cree, The Viking Ribstones (Viking referring to Viking, Albera, which was settled by Scandinavian diaspora) as relatives, then, are trans-temporal kin to both the texts and the arts-based materializations of research I have attempted across my dissertation and hope to continue beyond it. More intimately known as buffalo stones, these kin were (and are, as I will later emphasize) part of an extensive network of sacred sites on the prairie landscape dedicated to the spirit of the buffalo and in honour of all that they provide for people and all related kin, including how they (and their kin) were all connected cosmologically. It is likely that this network, known by westernized archaeology as the ~1,000-year-old Ribstone Complex, extended from Saskatchewan to Montana. The Viking Ribstones are some of the few remaining examples still in their ancestral location (and the only ones in Alberta), and still, I would argue, offer their spirit through to the present day. As Elder Louis Raine of the Louis Bull Nation shared with Donald and his students, “the [Viking] Ribstones site was originally comprised of a bull, a cow and a calf laying side by side on top of a prominent hill. Those buffalo became stones and the people began the practice of visiting the site to leave offerings and honour the spirit of the buffalo present at that place” (Donald, 2021, p. 55). Some

time after the flesh-and-blood buffalo were removed from the prairie landscape through systematic eradication by newcomers, “a new way of living was imposed, the newcomers did not allow the people to visit this, and other, sacred sites anymore. Instead, the buffalo stones were neglected, vandalized and even removed by those who did not consider them sacred” (Donald, 2021, p. 55). Yet, as Donald related a teaching from Solomon Bluehen, an Elder from the Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan, the remaining two stones, as inspirited, are still “considered life-giving and life-sustaining sites of sacred renewal” (Ford, 2010, para. 9).

Donald’s curricular field trip and Elder Raine’s mourning, and even my accounting through linear academic and noun-dominant English writing on a page, might cast the Ribstones as artefacts of the past without Elder Bluehen’s shift in tense. Indeed, the physical curriculum of the Ribstones would suggest the same: the Government of Alberta classifies the Ribstones as an “historical resource” of and now possessed by Alberta — of its all-consuming past, and therefore, by extension, fossilized or otherwise not alive. Indeed, the interpretive signs on site (as if a graveyard) all describe the stones in the past tense. However, these stones might also be understood as part of a yet-living, deeply complex multimodal relational interlocutor — as teachers. Even by westernized archaeological classifications, the stones are technically also *petroglyphs* or potential ‘teaching rocks’ (see Chapter 4). So, even though they might be described as inert quartzite boulders, their form and meaning were and are in relation to human existence in that place. The remaining two stones are carved in the shapes of animal rib cages, and are covered with human-made pock marks. These marks put the stones in relation to what is typically called the Iron Creek Meteorite, perhaps the most sacred embodied spirit ancestor of the buffalo. At the same time, First Nations peoples still visit the stones and leave offerings. Meanwhile, while with the stones, one can see across the landscape in all directions, just as one might have a thousand years ago. The stones themselves form an open ended "V" pointing toward the location from which the Iron Creek Meteorite was taken in 1866.

While Donald has not written on the relationship between the Ribstones and this meteorite, he has (in Arthurson, 2018) spoken more recently (than his earlier writing in 2009 or 2012) on its significance and even advocated on its behalf as a living ancestor, rather than an artefact. Such an accounting of knowledge as spiritually and animately materialized, I suggest, offers deeper insights and pedagogy on ethical and kinship relationality than what is typically

lifted and deployed by scholars in so-called decolonial academic discourse, including in education. And it is this kind of relationship to data that my thesis hopes for.

The 145-kilogram Iron Creek Meteorite was, according to Donald, originally named by the Plains Cree as papamihaw asiniy — or *Flying Rock*. Its existence was (is) inextricable to place and expandable cosmologies, as its location, its crash site, is where the traditional lands of the Cree and Blackfoot intersected, contested in battles due to the prevalence of life-sustaining buffalo. As Donald shared in 2018, the rock embodied a pedagogical message across time and space, "to remind the people that no one can own the land or the buffalo. These were meant to be held in common, openly and respectfully, shared by all" (Arthurson, 2018, para. 4). It brought peace to the area and a prophecy noted that if it was ever removed — and its lessons silenced — war, pestilence and famine would follow. Of course, Methodist missionaries rightly realized that the stone hampered their ability to convert (teach) Indigenous people toward Christianity. So, in 1866, they stole it and moved it to their churchyard. It sat there for nearly 10 years before they donated it to their minister's alma mater, Victoria Methodist College in Cobourg, Ontario. 10 years later, the plains buffalo were functionally extinct, and the Cree and Blackfoot decimated by violence and disease. The stone was then transformed into a scientific commodity, first possessed by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. It was not until the 1960s that amateur Albertan historians learned of its existence and recruited the help of the Calgary branch of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada to reclaim it as Alberta's. While at some point along this journey it was renamed the Manitou Stone, a recognition of a pan-First Nations spiritual and fundamental life force it embodied, it has been on display as an artefact at the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) since 1973.

Ever since, the pedagogy of Flying Rock has remained alive, inspirited, if perhaps dormant to the perception of most learners — it endures as does its story, if we are to trace along its place and placelessness, life and unlife. What has largely replaced it — a pedagogy of relationships to land and all its relatives — is one that continually denies such kin. Instead, as Red River Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd charges (2022), Alberta and wider Canadian settler state imagination otherwise understands geologic entities as possessed through recursive ancestry or as heritage resources without responsibilities to kinship. Centuries "of violations of humans and more-than-human beings [across Turtle Island] enacted through a stretching through time by white supremacist science [rests] on the deep anti-Blackness of euro-western ontologies" (p. 20).

Todd quotes Sylvia Wynter's (2003) deontological excavations of racist colonial imperialism, in which colonizers of Turtle Island strategically sought to strip spirit and agency from rocks and other fossil kin by reconceptualizing and exploiting them as a "vile and base matter" (p. 267). Todd (2022) argues that this is the relational basis upon which the "weaponisation of fossil kin" (i.e., fossil fuel extraction, pollution, and monetary leveraging by all humans) in Canada is "imagined and enacted by colonial agents", resulting in continual but always incomplete attempts to "turn sentient, agential homelands and beings such as fossils and rocks into inert things to own, possess, extract, and weaponise across and against vast geographies" (p. 20). While Todd (2022) "invites settler/colonial scholars working with and in dynamic homelands to *attune* to the obligations, responsibilities, and relationships they are [often gratuitously] invoking [e.g., spirit and animacy] when they mobilise lands, waters, and atmospheres as case studies in environmental text" (p. 4), I have throughout my thesis proposed that we must attune ourselves to the relationships and responsibilities we typically and gratuitously mobilise but do not honour when we use words like relationality and spirit.

Importantly, this call includes re-membering and taking to heart that time (which is also space, and place) can be perceived as nonlinear, emergent of space-time matterings — even dreamtimes (see Povinelli, 2016, 2019) characterised by flux and renewal (Deloria, 2003) of all of us as kin together (Little Bear, 2000; see also my work on critical future dreaming, 2021).

Like my presently evolving relationship with data as kin, Todd nevertheless feels hope and opportunities for all peoples living on Turtle Island — including racialized non-Black Indigenous peoples who can be complicit in colonial agency — to "reframe and refuse efforts to possess, mine, frack, violate fossil kin [and] other agential beings extracted from plural home-lands" (p. 20). As Todd (2022) references Donald's (2012) relational understanding of Flying Rock, the same logics and possibilities of resistance are at play. Flying Rock's connectedness "makes them worthy of respect as our metaphysical elders in the world today … [but] the removal of the rock allowed the place to be re-imagined and allowed the Prairies to be redefined in ways more conducive to EuroCanadian notions of land use and ownership" (pp. 12-17). More recently, however, Donald has indicated a less linear understanding of place, time, and spirit: relatives like Flying Rock "have an energy to them that is forever in flux. This cyclic energy is what gives the rock its spiritual quality" (Arthurson, 2018, para. 3). Flying rock is presently in flux between artefact and renew(ing) relation: Donald asks, "Wouldn't it be better if we put it

back where it was instead of trying to simulate where it came from?", likening the stone being in a museum to an animal captive in a zoo, a feeling which Chris Robinson, the executive director of the RAM, acknowledges — but also suggests that the discussion is still framed as "exactly who would take possession" of Flying Rock (Arthurson, 2018, para. 18). Flying Rock remains nevertheless cared for by RAM curators, through Cree Elder-taught practices of smudging, facilitation of ceremony and offerings, and barring of photos or requirements to pay to visit (RAM, 2025) the otherwise immensely commodifiable Group IIIAB medium octahedrite iron meteorite (Scott et al., 1973) resting within a simulated 360-degree landscape recreating its original resting place. Indeed, while the Alberta Government announced in 2022 on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation that Flying Rock would be repatriated to the Manitou Asinîy-Iniskim-Tsa Xani Center, it has yet to be moved. Some, deploying arguably hegemonic frameworks sourced in settler colonial studies, cite this delay as an effect of relentless settler colonial possession (e.g., Johnson et al., 2024). Candace Wasacase of Kahkewistahaw First Nation, the CEO of the Manitou Asiniy-Iniskim-Tsa Xani Centre, however, suggests that finding a new home for the stone must be a careful, relational process of care. All kin communities must be consulted and the reality of the present must be considered; Flying Rock's original resting place is a gravel pit, as a meteorite it is in danger of being stolen, and its present-day relatives want it to be protected as part of reconciliatory futurities, with all of the future potential of reconciliation and resurgence, "all of those [relational] things are represented in the body of this stone" (Swensrude, 2024, para. 7). Wasacase sees the work of "the Manitou Stone as marrying the idea of reconciliation and reclamation and repatriation," envisioning a centre as part of a pilgrimage to the stone as an ancient ancestor and a contemporary teacher of language and science — "STEM is a big thing for [Wasacase's community], looking to the stars, learning from the stars, and Indigenous science" (Swensrude, 2024, para. 23). While the present emphasis is on reviving such trans-temporal kinship and kin as teachers for Indigenous communities, these pilgrimages would conceivably not exclude non-Indigenous relatives. For now, we might easily understand that Flying Rock is indeed an ancestor from deep time — dating to the time of creation as we all may differently but commensurably know it.

Such alternatives to our more-than-human kin as inert commodities possessed by certain essentialized peoples can be extended to me and my pre-colonial ancestor kin. Relational, multidisciplinary frameworks are indeed beginning to transform Western understandings of

Neolithic monuments like Stonehenge, shifting interpretations away from models solely focused on power, elite prestige, resource control, or singular rationalized functions (like purely astronomical observatories or elite burial grounds). Instead, emerging relational perspectives emphasize the role of these sites in integrating diverse biological, social, spiritual, and cosmological networks, fostering unity amidst diversity and complex kinship relations across geographies and time as non-linear. Research combining archaeology with archaeogenetics, geology, anthropology, and landscape studies are only presently tracing this latent kinship ecology. The typical westernized basis of kinship (see Chapter 3) itself is being re-evaluated in these contexts. Researchers argue that biological relatedness (revealed by DNA) is only one facet of Neolithic European kinship, which, like in many societies across our globe's history and potential future, was likely actively constructed through social practices of "kinwork"—caring, sharing, feasting, living, working, and honouring spirits and ancestors together (Abel & Frieman, 2023; Brück, 2021; Cummings et al., 2024).

The monumental collective effort involved in sourcing and transporting stones from distant locations—such as Stonehenge's bluestones from Wales and its Altar Stone from northern Scotland—is now often interpreted not just as a display of power and control of peoples and lands, but as evidence of extensive relationality across large regions (Parker Pearson et al., 2024; Cummings et al., 2024). Some researchers propose Stonehenge was built as a monument of unification for Neolithic peoples across Britain, perhaps solidifying alliances and engendering collective kinship, maybe even in response to increasing contact with continental newcomers (Parker Pearson et al., 2024; Mills, 2024). The act of bringing materials from different, significant landscapes could symbolize the coming together of diverse groups and their shared and differing ancestral connections to different but kindred places. Even the act of building Stonehenge, across millennia and divergent cultures, was vastly intergenerational. The Altar Stone itself, a 6-tonne megalith, traveled at least 700 kilometres to reach its present resting place. This may have taken years and hundreds of carriers, and so involved many ceremonial stops in diverse places and communities along the way. These data-spirit kin yet endure, and offer their lessons wherever we may be in time.

While Pearson et al. (2024) suggests that such kinwork was ultimately unsuccessful — druidic 'pagan' kinwork did not withstand later waves of migration, settlement and then conquest — such more-than-human kin endure. While it costs a significant number of British Pounds to

enter the site of Stonehenge proper, many British diaspora continue to make pilgrimages to experience it. While, like the Ribstone sites, Stonehenge is a contested landscape in which some seek neoliberal adventure, many also seek spirit kindred across lost and broken stories of relationship (Bender, 2024). Across my dissertation project, I have similarly sought to not passively understand but feel data as kin, including a non-linear understanding of time and place. Just as archaeologists are moving beyond singular interpretations of data kin as focused on power and prestige derived from Western assumptions about hierarchy and control, I have tried to begin a conversation about how, Indigenous or not, we within education prioritize extraction, mastery, and categorization over relational understanding. I challenge notions of data or archives (where we then encounter data as represented) as inert and argue against reducing complex phenomena (like the Truth and Reconciliation teacher education and its inextricable relational calls) to fit existing, often inadequate, neoliberalizing frameworks.

Relearning Data: Contributions and Spirit

What my work offers, however, by rematerializing the relational spirit of my data is perhaps deeper (and deepens wider conversations on relationality, ethics, and complexity) in that I call on anyone reading this thesis to not just cast themselves as an observer of place and spirit, but to recognize their agency in its co-creation — its inspiriting. What is missing across so many printed pages on relationality and its related paradigms like truth and reconciliation are accounts of spirit taken as real and integral as all other relational co-constituents. We must extend and represent kinship beyond human ties to include the more-than-human world—land, water, spirit. This is essential for ethical relationality and reconciliation as it is hoped for. And if we do so, we must further recognize how such a sense of care requires a challenge to colonial paradigms of time and place, and authenticity or hierarchy of relational worth. Places and data as truly relational are not static structures with fixed meanings but loci where relationships and meanings are actively negotiated, renewed, and reimagined over time and across time non-linearly, outside a mind/body, brain/spirit, or place-space binary. Without spirit, we cannot have ethically complex relationships with each other and our endangered bio-spiritual sphere. Indigenous or not, we must move away from data as power, possession, essentialization, and exclusion of those who can or cannot perceive — and so who can or cannot care about it. We must also realize that we can inspirit and be inspirited across real or imagined places, however (presently) socially constructed as static archives.

My body of work here, presented across three interconnected articles, offers, I think, a unique and multifaceted contribution to Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) teacher education, educational research methodology, and the broader aims of research and teaching towards decolonial, relational, and inspirited futurities. The project fundamentally reframes TRC teacher education not merely as the integration of Indigenous content or perspectives into existing or separate curricula focused on historicizing unsettling and unlearning, but as a deeply relational, ethical, and transformative process of *re-learning* for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and students. I critique the limitations of current approaches, often stuck in cycles of "unsettling" without moving towards genuine relational repair and responsibility. I further argue strongly against superficial inclusion or integration of Indigenous topics. Instead, I suggest pedagogies centered on kinning encounter, ethical relationality, and intersubjective change. The concept of the "transeunt listener" exemplifies this — urging educators and students to engage with texts (and by extension, knowledge and peoples) not as objects to be mastered, but as sites of potential transformation, requiring embodied presence, ethical attention, and a willingness to be moved and changed (Phillips, 2024). I further address the limitations of how settler consciousness is kept in stasis, and so how our praxes keep us in relationship denying inertia. I suggest what is still prevalent amongst non-Indigenous scholars writing in favour of decolonization: the tendency to remain in a "perfect stranger" position (Dion, 2007), perpetually "unsettled" but unwilling or feeling unable to move towards responsibility and kinship by the virtue of settler colonial studies frameworks being commodified. I challenge widespread suggestions by many scholars, by virtue of their language use, that concepts like ethical and kinship relationality (e.g., wâhkôhtowin) are inherently inaccessible to non-Indigenous peoples, arguing instead that the limitations often stem from self-imposed perceptual frameworks and a failure to embrace deeper ecological kinship responsibilities. I push humanely beyond "unlearning" towards active "re-learning" —relearning how to be in relation, how to *care*, and how to recognize shared humanity and kindred interconnectedness with the more-than-human world.

Perhaps my work's most significant contribution to TRC teacher education is the insistence on bringing "spirit" into the conversation. While some (e.g., Celidwen & Keltner, 2024, p. 3) make the move to "define" spirit as "the animating principle of life weaving all relationships" and while I do not necessarily disagree with their definition, the impulse behind

my project is not to identify, classify, or ‘fix’ what spirit might be. Rather, my project was to consider how we might even begin to discuss, without collapsing difference, spirit in a relationally fulsome manner: how to individually and together represent our sense of spirit, however partial or limited by our present perceptual limitations, through our shared senses. I suggest that it is not my place to define spirit—not because I am non-Indigenous, but because I am only (socially constructed as one) human. Simultaneously, however, as a human, of flesh, I share affordances across difference and my limited senses, and some of my senses may be more open than others, or I might be more sensitive to some relationships than another person or entity, and *vice versa*. Taking seriously Blackfoot researcher and author Leroy Little Bear’s (2000) premise that if we are all constituted of relationships with each other and all of creation, we are all relatives. And if we are to truly embrace a lasting, intergenerational transformation of relationships as implied by notions of Reconciliation, we must be open to new ancestors, including new spirits and relationships with them. What I can posit is that spirit is not just what animates all life but perhaps vitally contributes to animating care for it within and beyond ourselves, across but without denying difference, and enables (or might enable) ethical and kinship relationality for all humans.

Relationality, ethics, and kinship are thus incomplete without acknowledging spirit as a real, animate force integral to all relationships and ecological existence. This moves beyond vague notions of "spirituality" as private experience towards recognizing spirit as a fundamental aspect of Indigenous worldviews, Treaties, and by extension all of our existences — as a necessary component for bridging the gap between ethical understanding and embodied kinship. I offer that we should all be concerned with how we do or do not represent spirit (and other attending relationships) in our praxes as a matter of care and how to care. Inspiriting TRC education involves recognizing the more-than-human world (land, water, animals, cosmos) as kin, imbued with spirit and deserving of ethical consideration and care. This offer challenges the anthropocentrism inherent in much western/ized educational thought and offers a pathway towards deeper ecological and relational understanding, essential for reconciliation understood as relationship renewal. Critically, such a deeper understanding honours even our ostensibly incomplete reachings toward likewise deeper, if individually incomplete, understandings or relationships with ecologies, including reachings toward spirit as being in relation and of spirit. The work suggests that teaching educators how to recognize, relate to, and represent their own

sense of spirit and kinship is crucial for fostering these capacities in future teachers. My extensive critique of how institutional structures, colonial logics, and academic conventions often constrain TRC education is salient across all research communities today. In the face of pressure towards commodification of knowledge, the (perceived) limitations of textual representation, and the ways universities can perpetuate epistemic violence and harm, even within programs ostensibly focused on reconciliation, I demonstrate possible alternative interpretive frameworks and dissemination methods.

My work (which is also that of my participants' data and my collaboration with Jordyn Hendricks) embodied significant methodological innovation and critique open for all to consider as discipline-independent, pushing the boundaries of research as not just arts-based but towards more broadly relational, ethical, and ontologically expansive approaches. Even my literature review work deepened reading not as passive consumption or extraction of information, but as an active, embodied, ethical encounter. Future students and academics may attempt the same, being present with texts psychically, attending to the implied hopes, fears, and affective dimensions, allowing the text and its author(s) to potentially transform the reader's understanding and beliefs as embodied within the act of research itself. My methodological framework of inspiriting explicitly incorporates spirit as participatory and possibly perceived within our theorizing, considering also the westernized assumption that we must be able to fully describe what spirit "is" — our reaching towards relationality and spirit is itself a register of spirit. This methodology challenges researchers to move beyond purely cognitive or even affective engagement towards an onto-epistemological stance that recognizes the spiritual dimensions of knowing and being as real and integral to complex ecologies of kinship. It involves attending to "relational lacunae"—the gaps or voids in westernized knowledge systems where spirit and deep kinship are often obscured or denied, even if we might only presently be able to trace such kin; I offer that we can nevertheless be always open to addressing our students' and our own relational disabilities through attending to how our present imaginative-material arrangements disable our relational perception.

Moving beyond siloed frames of data, my present and future representations of data honour them as animate subjects, imbued with spirit and interconnectedness. I share an iterative and reflexive process, involving my own embodied emotional and imaginative engagement with the data, honouring it as "something given." I explicitly draw inspiration from portraiture

methodologies but expand them beyond textual representation to include visual and material registers, while also centering Indigenous concepts of animacy and spirit. As an aesthetico-political intervention into data representation, I argue that how data is represented is not simply neutral or biased but is an act that shapes or denies perception, understanding, and ethical relations including of spirit. My critique-by-example extends to conventional academic outputs (articles, reports) and data visualization techniques, arguing that their authors often strip data of its relational context and spirit. The proposed alternative—collaborative, arts-based materialization of data in physical/gallery spaces—is presented as a way to honour the relationality of data, engage audiences sensorially and affectively, and create spaces for deeper, more ethical encounters with knowledges as locations and relatives imbued and imbuing of spirit. My methodology emphasizes collaboration and reciprocity, particularly in the context of cross-cultural research involving Indigenous knowledges. The subsequent and future collaboration with Two-Spirit Métis artist Jordyn Hendricks to materialize the findings further embodies this commitment, moving beyond a single interpretive authority towards a co-conceptualization process of shared and differing worldviews, including and beyond Truth and Reconciliation as institutionally situated.

Futurities of Data as Inspirited

I further humbly suggest some significant implications for the future direction of educational research, teacher education, and pedagogical practice, including but beyond Truth and Reconciliation, relationality, and ethics. I hope that future alternative dissemination platforms as prototyped within and beyond my project may offer concrete ways to cultivate awareness of and engagement with spirit in diverse educational settings (ECE, K-12, higher education, community learning) without imposing specific religious beliefs or even the framework of religion. My project's findings strongly suggest that teacher education programs need to move beyond viewing spirituality as taboo, private, or individualized and instead equip educators with frameworks and tools to explore the role of spirit in learning, ethical development, and relational well-being. Educators may need support in navigating their own relationship with spirit and modelling this vulnerability and exploration for students. It is beyond the scope of my thesis to address implications for assessment and specifics of curriculum as codified and operationalized, but I believe I have demonstrated that truly relating topics such as

truth and reconciliation implicates profound changes in how we conceive of teacher, teaching, and learning that may require new vocabularies to begin describing.

As I have suggested throughout my thesis, this could nevertheless begin today with greater care towards how aesthetic experiences and representations shape political subjectivities, ethical understanding, and social imaginaries within education. How do different representational forms enable or disable particular kinds of ethical and political engagement is not a new question, but my work amplifies deeper ethics in research and teaching to become embodied, affective, and relational, rather than purely abstract or procedural. The importance of spirit within and across relational ethics appears to be its capacity — through our perception and sharing of it — for a deep and deepening sense of *care*—care for data, for participants, for students, for colleagues, for human and more-than-human kin, and for shared futurities.

And so, as aesthetico-political philosopher Sean Cubitt (2023) considers at the end of his own sojourn to the limits of philosophical expression, in the "belief that sensible phenomena are all alive and aware, [is also] the assumption that all things have the capacity of speech. Language, for oral peoples, is not a human invention but a gift of the land itself" (p. 264). Human language, Cubitt (2023) continues,

> arose not only as a means of attunement between persons, but also between ourselves and the animate landscape [… By] insisting that the river has no real voice and that the ground itself is mute, we stifle our direct experience. We cut ourselves off from the deep meanings in many of our words, severing our language from that which supports and sustains it. We then wonder why we are often unable to communicate even among ourselves. (p. 264)

As Abram (1997) remembers linguist Benjamin Whorf's work with the Hopi peoples of northeastern Arizona, formative of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that is ubiquitously deployed across academia and popular culture to erroneously prove that the structure of a language *determines* a speaker's perception and categorization of experience, Whorf was not asserting an absence of temporal awareness among the Hopi, but rather an absence, in their discourse, of any metaphysical concept of time that could be isolated from their dynamic awareness of matter, space, and spirit. The Hopi did (and do) discern between two interdependent and co-constituting notions of existence: the "manifested" and "manifesting," which Whorf was indeed able to write about. What is manifested (objectively true/real) is emergent of a manifesting of "all that is or

has been accessible to the senses … with no [hierarchical distinction] between present and past, but including everything that we call future" (Abram, 1997, p. 192). Future, here, includes equally and indistinguishably all that we call mental—everything that appears (or that we perceive to appear) or exists in the mind, including "not only the heart of man, but the heart of animals, plants, and [all] things, and behind and within all the forms" of phenomena made evident (or not) to our senses (p. 193). Including in "manifesting" is that which is not yet explicit, not yet present to the senses, but which is "gathering itself toward manifestation within the depths of all sensible phenomena" — inclusive of one's feeling, thinking, and desiring "[that are a part of] and hence participant with this collective desiring and preparing implicit in all things-from the emergence and fruition of the corn, to the formation of clouds and the bestowal of rain" (p. 193). Our attunement with spirit as relation within such manifesting means that our own spirit is participant in the constituting of such kin and how we care about them. And so, as Bertrand Russell (1922) suggests of Wittgenstein's (1922) explorations at the limits of language, I, and we, may be hesitant about engaging with spirit in our praxes, because we may find that we are already able to "say a good deal about what cannot be said" (p. 2). We may find we have a great deal to care about, but perhaps also that there are a great many kin who might yet care for us.

Similar to how I consider research and educational assumptions of data, relating to them, and honouring their spirit in re/presentation, interdisciplinary archaeologist Bonnie Pitblato and colleagues (2025) presently contemplate some of the ways in which archaeological 'artefacts' are "valued, understood, perceived, and accepted by the different people to whom they matter, and [so] what is at stake when we reframe them" (p. 209). For Pitblato and colleagues, their intentionally decolonial contemplation across disciplines necessarily leads them to draw "from understandings of things as having agentic and sometimes life forces" (p. 209), while acknowledging their own human, westernized, and disciplinarily representational limitations. Pitblato et al. (2025) begin their critique of artefacts as inert objects with the highly influential (including to scholars like Dwayne Donald) philosophical synthesis of Tim Ingold (2010), who proposes the word 'thing' instead of 'object' as a cognitive avenue out of implying something like an artefact (or in my case a data set) is enclosed and separate from the world, life, and us. While Ingold's intention was to emphasize the relationality of the relationship instead of the discrete 'thing' — the coming together of the multiple threads of existence is what we must work

towards articulating — Ingold's theories may ironically deemphasize or even fail to appreciate the persistence of what such relationality materializes: i.e., us and each other as related *and* agential beings (for counterpoints to Ingold's theories see Olsen, 2010 and Fowler and Harris, 2015). Instead, Pitblato et al. (2025) turn to ideas of 'thing power' as demonstrated by philosopher Jane Bennett (2010) and material cultures scholar Sophie Woodward (2021) to recognize that relational "potencies result from relations among things, as well as from including people(s) in these inter-relationships" (p. 212). As the authors quote Latour (2000), "things do not exist without being full of people" (p. 10).

Including all people(s) as flesh and blood in praxes of relationality is, I think, very much what the TRC's calls intended: to appreciate that we are all related to each other through our shared becoming in vast ecological and cosmological relationships, but that we must also embrace each other as relatives not only to avoid repeating past horrors but also to realize more ethically sustainable, shared futurities. While Pitblato et al. (2025) focus on troubling traditional processual archaeological views, indeed vocabularies, of 'artefacts' as "inanimate objects pursued through collection-based research with the express goal of using them to generate scientific data" (p. 213), I suggest more is needed. Indeed, my reading of Pitblato et al. (2025) suggests (and as they also acknowledge their disciplinarily limited representational repertoire) to me that, however interdisciplinary their team might have been, these researchers were lost for words: they arrived at the placeholder and potentially neoliberal word "belongings" in lieu of a better (and suggested by the authors to be linguistically distant to them in Indigenous languages) concept for 'artefact.' (p. 215). While the authors do not explicitly consider the verb-form potential of "belongings" (things are events of different interlocutors finding or entering into belonging together), I believe I can see, or at least am beginning to see, the potential of data as emergent of belonging(s) between each other, us, and all of our relationships. As I concluded in Chapter 4, the potential pedagogic entanglements with the future, planned materialization of my dissertation data suggests the possibility of a re-membering of knowledge, as data, theory, or tangible object, as portable and lifelong transformative epistemological technology of belonging. In more concrete terms, such belonging(s) need not be so abstract and can be made visible, audible, tactile, and open to all our sensorial affordances through belongings, enfleshed as physical material and collective sharing of our sensorial experiences of spirit, however internalized or abstracted spirit might be in contemporary westernized life, broadly construed.

Seeing (or feeling, touching, tasting, etc.) data as in relation to and of spirit especially, for me, cinches a relationally encompassing implication of my thesis: that the aesthetico-political, if inspirited through inspiriting data and its representation, may further (and may be urgently needed to) inform our increasingly global crises of relationships — the ostensibly best word and model we presently have for these relationships being 'democracy.' As I conclude the processual requirements of my dissertation documentation, I am presently contemplating the broader bio-spirit-social implications of relearning data through the works of Viktor Frankl (1988, 2006) in relation to that of Claude Lefort (2006) amidst the worrying material movements of the world around me. While Frankl's life work in psychology focuses on the human need to find meaning despite dreadful suffering and blinding loss, Lefort's political philosophies address where those meanings may be felt or hidden on a social scale.

My reading of Lefort (2006) suggests to me that the perpetual failure of typical democratic communities since modernity and so the cyclical rise of fascist states stems from a denial of sacred relationships, perhaps of spirit, as real and integral to sustainable and just relations. Lefort emphasizes that the political is not merely institutional but symbolic; democracy depends on imaginaries that mediate the relation between peoples and power. For Lefort, these imaginaries often echo theological forms even if they are reframed in secular language, meaning that even our colonial institutions contain and circulate elements of the sacred in how they structure authority, legitimacy, and collective identity, however reconfigured and perhaps enslaved to capital. During times of instability and doubt, populist and fascist regimes access what Lefort (1986) called the "empty place" where the sacred was once made visible — attempting to fill that absence through binding, homogenizing, and consolidating sovereign power through symbolic processes. Lefort suggests that aesthetic practices can work in both directions, renewing how ritual, myth, and transcendence remain central to political identity— without returning to traditional hegemonic, hierarchical religion. Such practices may be initiated through art that resists fixed and singular meanings while making visible both the necessity and impossibility of total representation toward spaces in which sacredness is shared across difference. Difference for me includes disciplinarity, which is arguably and productively destabilized by aesthetico-political practices — art and material cultures are always changing, reacting, and provoking status quo representational repertoires.

Lefort's (2006) idea of the "empty place of power" in democracy finds kin with Frankl's (1988) observation of the "existential vacuum," and both suggest a kind of existential risk that we indeed should care about and an inspirited worldview of belonging, taught by all of our relations, may allow us to ad/redress. For Frankl, this vacuum is created by modernity's dissolution of (and I would offer atomization through privatization of spiritual experience) of transcendent meanings, leaving a symbolic and emotional void within and between individuals. Aesthetico-political projects, especially those that deal with themes of enduring historical traumas, transcendence, and relational renewal, can be interpreted through Frankl's experiential framework as vehicles for meaning-making rather than definitions. Where Lefort sees representational experimentation, such as art, reconfiguring the symbolic order of democracy/society, Frankl (2006) might see it offering humane, affective responses to the existential vacuum by generating both shared and personal vocabularies of spirit. Drawing from his experiences in Nazi concentration camps, Frankl (2006) contended that even in the most dehumanizing and relationally denying conditions, individuals can discover meaning through acts of love, spiritual reflection, or ethical choice. Frankl further humanizes humans together (e.g., Jewish, German, Indigenous or non) by suggesting that the primary, psychical motivational force in human beings is not the pursuit of pleasure (e.g., Freud) or power (e.g., Adler), but the pursuit of meaning in life, which societies and individuals continue to seek through enduring forms of the sacred (e.g., art, ethics, or politics).

I thus offer my reader a parting gift or datum: that if we were to hold and shift 'artefacts' — 'data' — from implying responsibilities of "belongings" owned into "belongings" of intersecting relational intensities that are always-already with and of spirit, we may remember that the 'pursuit of knowledge' (or data and their meaning) can easily be reconfigured into a journey of seeking belonging(s). I therefore offer that my dissertation documentation here has been a storying of such a journey. Because to belong suggests not only recognition but also a caring embrace of all our enmeshed and enmeshing relationships that includes sharing our pluralities of relational perception with each other, I suggest that it is yet exceedingly ethical to seek such data, such kin.

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Appendix A

Approvals Necessary to Conduct the Research

02/11/2022

Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-09-22-8397
Titre du projet / Project Title	Unsettling Data in Education: Visualizing Truth and Reconciliation Teacher Education as an Emerging Relational Field
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	02/11/2022
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	01/11/2023

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Patrick PHILLIPS	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Nicholas NG-A-FOOK	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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02/11/2022

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout évènement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completedfour weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Kim THOMPSON
Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer
Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

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